

STUDIA PHILOSOPHICA WRATISLAVIENSIA

Supplementary Volume, English Edition 2012

Edited by
Adam Chmielewski, Roman Konik
Damian Leszczyński, Artur Pacewicz

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**Studia Philosophica
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Contents

Adam CHMIELEWSKI, <i>Editor's Foreword</i>	7
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History of Philosophy

Artur PACEWICZ, <i>The Concept of the Good</i> (tagathon) <i>in Philosophy before Plato</i>	11
Agnieszka WOSZCZYK, <i>The conception of alethēs anthrōpos</i> <i>in Plotinus' Enneads</i>	27
Michał GŁOWALA, <i>Coming to a Conclusion and significatum propositionis</i> <i>according to Gregory of Rimini</i>	39

Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

Damian LESZCZYŃSKI, <i>What is 'Naive Realism'?</i>	55
Wojciech SADY, <i>The Early Wittgenstein on Thought and World</i>	71
Katarzyna GURCZYŃSKA-SADY, <i>The Relationship between Soul and Body</i> <i>in Wittgenstein's Late Philosophical Investigation</i>	81
David MILLER, <i>Overcoming the Justificationist Addiction</i>	93
Krzysztof SZLACHCIC, <i>Conventions, Styles of Thinking and Relativism.</i> <i>Some Remarks on the Dispute between I. Dąmbska and L. Fleck</i>	105
Marek SIKORA, <i>Constructivism and Realism on the Status</i> <i>of Scientific Facts. Bruno Latour versus Ian Hacking</i>	125

Ethics and Philosophy of Politics

Joseph W. BENDERSKY, <i>Hobbesian Anthropology, the Interminable Enemy,</i> <i>and State Theory: Intellectual Convergences in Carl Schmitt</i> <i>and Sigmund Freud</i>	143
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Hans SLUGA, <i>Pluralism of the Political. From Carl Schmitt to Hannah Arendt</i>	155
Stanisław ŁOJEK, <i>Leo Strauss's Utopia of 'Return' as an Anti-Modern Anti-Utopia</i>	171
Dorota DRAŁUS, <i>MacIntyre and the Anatomy of Patriotic Morality</i>	187
Maksymilian ROSZYK, <i>Historicism and Justification. Alasdair MacIntyre's Historicist Conception of Justification</i>	203
Magdalena ŻARDECKA-NOWAK, <i>Political Philosophy and Postmodern Society</i>	221
Jolanta ZDYBEL, <i>Net and Power. Axiological Contribution to Net Theory and Reflection on Globalization</i>	231

Aesthetics

Adam CHMIELEWSKI, <i>Duty and Beauty. Evolutionary Ethics in Relation to the Darwinian Aesthetics</i>	249
Roman KONIK, <i>The Anthropology of Picture. The Reason to History of Picture</i>	267
Joanna K. TESKE, <i>The Methodology of the Humanities and Karl R. Popper's Philosophy of Science and Art</i>	275

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Editor's Foreword

The present English language issue of the journal *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* is one of the two planned issues whose express aim is to propagate worldwide the contributions of the younger generation of the Polish philosophers to the philosophical debates.

The philosophical quarterly *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* has been established by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Wrocław, Poland, in 2005, and its first issue has been published in 2006. Ever since our journal has been enjoying a growing reputation and acclaim among the Polish philosophers, both in the city of Wrocław, in which several lively centres of the philosophical research function, in the country as a whole, as well as abroad. The Editorial Board of our journal reflects this variety and consists accordingly of distinguished scholars representing the philosophical centres in the city, as well as those from the country and several international institutions.

The recognition won by our journal thus far has found also a formal expression in the decision of Poland's Ministry of Science and Higher Education to include it in the national Master Journal List. We like to believe this act of recognition, which took place only three years since the launching of our journal, testifies to the scholarly merit of authors who contributed their papers, as well as the quality of our editorial work.

Most of the papers included in this issue have been authored by the Polish philosophers who have contributed to our journal ever since its establishment in 2006. However, since among our authors there has been a number of foreign philosophers contributing to our journal on a regular basis, several papers of those international scholars have been included in the present issue as well.

The English language edition of our journal has been made possible thanks to the grant No 31H 11 0059 80, entitled: "*Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* – the English language electronic edition of the philosophical quarterly". The grant has been awarded to our team by the Poland's Ministry of Science and Higher Education within the framework of the National Programme of the Development of Humanities (M. P. No 86, 1014).

I would like hereby to express my sincere thanks to all authors whose papers are being published in this issue, as well as to all people involved in this project, most especially members of the editorial team: Professor Damian Leszczyński, Dr. Artur Pacewicz and Dr. Roman Konik. Special thanks are due to the translators who cooperated with us, i.e. Dr. Andrzej Głazek, Ms. Magdalena Krzysiak and Mr. Grant Hennessy.

I would like to thank also Ms. Julita Mrzygłód for her invaluable help in managing the financial aspect of our undertaking.

Adam Chmielewski
Professor, Editor-in-Chief

History of Philosophy

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The Concept of the Good (*tagathon*) in Philosophy before Plato*

Abstract

The aim of the article is to outline an interpretation of the philosophical understanding of the concept of the good in pre-Platonic thought. The interpretation is based on those fragments only in which the concept actually appears. As a result of the adopted assumption, the ideas of the first philosophers, i.e. Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes, were outside the scope of the investigation, as well as those of Xenophanes, Eleatics, Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Leucippus. In the case of the first philosophical systems of the pre-Platonic philosophy one notices a connection between the good and the One. It can also be found that understanding of the ‘the Best’ is depended on, and results from, ‘the good’. This is true also in Heraclitus, though, at the same time, he introduces a significant reversal in this respect, for he abolishes the absolute difference between the good and evil, and turns it to a subjective relation. The good has no ontological basis in the Democritus’ system as well, though the good’s connection with truth, accessible for every human being, allows to interpret him as arguing for an objectivistic conception of the good. The objectivity of good has subsequently been denied by the Sophists.

The aim of this article is to reconstruct and introduce the concept of the Good as it appears in philosophies before Plato, on the basis of only those extracts where the analysed notion occurs. At the beginning, it seems important to mention that the concept cannot be reconstructed from the works of the first three “physicists”, i.e., the philosophers of Miletus: Thales, Anaximander¹ and Anaximenes, either because they did not deal with the idea of Good at all, or because there is no information that makes the reconstruction possible. A similar situation occurs in the

* This paper is a slightly revised and extended version of a text published in the *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, I [1] (2006), pp. 87–99.

¹ According to W.C. Greene (‘Fate, Good and Evil in Pre-Socratic Philosophy’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 47 (1936), p. 92) *to apeiron* is a good and he suggests that the cause of evil is the diversification, which appears in this principle. But it is rather that the good is the balance between opposites and evil comes out together with upsetting this balance.

case of Xenophanes,² the Eleatics, Empedocles,³ Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia and Leucippus.⁴ Probably, the problem of the Good had already appeared in so called rational pre-philosophical thinking, in eudaimonological, moral, as well as political contexts. In Homer's epics, a unique value system is founded on convictions about the superiority of people of good birth, whose task was basically to take part in war, where they could show their valour not only as physical strength (Ajax) but also wisdom (Nestor) and cunning (Odysseus).⁵ Hesiod perceives reality from the point of view of a simple man-farmer, whose role is to work in the fields and be obedient to God's Law. Such conduct ensures affluence because the world is ruled by Justice (Dike) which rewards hard work, and punishes rejection of the divine law. Solon, in his poetic works, indicates the necessity of subordinating the value system to political activity. All human activity ought to be subordinated to the country's good which depends [entirely] on the citizens' respect for the law, and the law determines what is good and right. In their moralising, the thinkers ranked as the Seven Wise Men referred to the values connected with the country's good, living in accordance with religious law and moderation. The concept of a punishing Justice was also followed by the Orphics. The orphic idea had a much more advanced moral system, additionally encapsulated in a certain code of commandments. Killing, and eating meat were not allowed, whereas respect and love towards living creatures were required. The consequence of violating the rules is either eternal punishment and torture, or being sent to the circle of lives in order to become purified.⁶

1. Pythagoreans

Theorizing about Good began with the emergence of Pythagorean philosophy. The first Pythagorean establishment in the form of a school probably arose thanks to Pythagoras himself, after his appearance at Croton. There are three aspects of this first philosophy school that can be discussed.⁷ First of all, it worked as a religious-cult association, which had its origins in Orphic religion. Secondly, it was a school with a political character, in other words, its aim was to educate

² According to Greene (*ibidem*, s. 95) the role of the good is played by the Xenophanes' god, and evil is among the phaenomena. But it seems that the good is the nature of the whole reality and it constitutes the essence of nature. Acceptance of the Greene's statement spells recognition that the good is the essence of evil.

³ In the first book of his *Metaphysics* (985a) Aristotle interprets two active principles of Empedocles' philosophy in the axiological manner. Love is the cause of the good and Strife is the cause of evil; moreover, because the former is the cause of order (*taksis*) and the latter of disorder [*ataksia*]. Aristotle was probably followed by Plutarch, who interpreted Love as *agathourgos* (*De Iside et Osiride*, 370D = DK 31 B 18). But the four "roots" are simply joined by Love and divided by Strife. It seems quite difficult to interpret these operations in axiological terms.

⁴ Such opinion was already present in antiquity. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141b 3-6 (= DK 59 A 30); Plato, *Phaedo*, 97b-98b (= DK 59 A 47).

⁵ For more detailed discussion of the values in the non philosophical Greek literature before Plato see f.i. J. Gajda, *Teorie wartości w filozofii przedplatońskiej* (Wrocław 1992), pp. 15-54.

⁶ See A. Krokiewicz, *Studia orfickie* (Warszawa 1947), pp. 56-61.

⁷ J. Gajda, *Pitagorejczycy* (Warszawa 1996), pp. 64-65.

future social leaders and it itself gained considerable political influence in Southern Italy, which possibly led to Italy's dissolution. Thirdly, it was a scientific research centre, where scientists [*mathēmatikoi*] dealt with mathematics as well as with the disciplines strictly associated therewith – astronomy and music. If we turn to a fragment from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* where the Stagirite presents the Pythagorean table of opposites, in the column that includes the positive things and values, there are also the following: what is limited [*peras*], odd [*peritton*], unity [*hen*], right [*deksion*], masculine [*arren*], quiescent [*eremoun*], straight [*eu-thu*], light [*phōs*], and square [*tetragōnon*]. There is also Good [*agathon*], whose opposite is Bad [*kakon*].⁸ The mutual relation is also indicated by the Stagirite in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. He points out that for Pythagoreans Unity was one of the goods [*tōn agathōn*], and the Good itself they related to the limited [*peperasmenon*].⁹ If one believes this form of Pythagorean philosophy, it ought to be accepted that the Good had for Pythagoreans the character of a principle [*archē*] and, as with other principles, it was located at “the beginning” of the system, so it would be that part of being thanks to which everything is; yet it itself is not with regard to nothing. Apart from what is good, Pythagoreans also spoke about what was most beautiful and best [*kalliston kai ariston*]. Yet, as opposed to the Good, they were not at the beginning but at the end, since they were regarded as a result and not as a reason and a principle.¹⁰ This is why it can be admitted that the Good, as a principle, is the reason for what is best because what is best, depends on determining what is right or good, that is, what is best, is with regard to the Good, which becomes a measure for it.

2. Heraclitus of Ephesus

The philosopher from Ephesus also articulated a certain conception of Good. He says, for example, that “both good and bad are one” (DK 22 B 58: *kai agathon kai kakon hen estin*). It is probably one of the sentences in which the unity of the opposites is meant. We should remember that for the ancient “physicists” philosophy is also theology, and, thus, the philosophy of Heraclitus is a theology as well. For him, a god and a human being are opposites, because “for the gods all things are beautiful, good and just, and for men, some things are grasped as unjust, others as just” (DK 22 B 102: *tōi men theōi kala panta kai agatha kai dikaia, anthrōpoi de ha men adika hupeilēphasin ha de dikaia*).

The connection shared between fragments 58 and 102 allows us to say that good and evil are one and they become the good (the difference is wiped out in order to establish a positive axiological value), but this takes place only in the ab-

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 986a 23–26. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I: *The earlier Presocratics* (Cambridge 1962), pp. 207, 245–246. According to C.J. de Vogel (*Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism. An Interpretation of Neglected Evidence on the Philosopher Pythagoras* (Assen 1966), pp. 192–202) this connection is amongst other links the Pythagorean tradition with Plato's philosophy.

⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1096b 5–6; 1106b 29–30; Archytas, fr. B 5 Timpanaro Cardini. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History...*, vol. I, pp. 245–246.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1072b 31–34. See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History...*, vol. I, p. 251.

solute perspective of the god-*logos*. It seems that man can only realize this unity, because even a philosopher is left during his life to distinguish between good and evil. But this consciousness makes man good. For Heraclitus, there are few good people [*agathoi*], because only a few reach awareness of the nature of the whole reality. The ontological status of the Heraclitean principle [*archē*] need not to be explained, but it can be asked if the god-*logos* can be interpreted in the axiological way. Heraclitus does not explicitly connect the god with the axiological categories in any of his fragments, but it seems that there is some possibility of such an interpretation. It is well known that according to Heraclitus, introspection is the way of recognizing the essence of reality. In this process there is a discovery of rationality [*logos*] as the peculiar feature of man, which distinguishes him from the animals and decides about the identity of the human race.¹¹ In Greek philosophy we find the intellect strictly connected with the soul, which is not fully and absolutely cognizable. The soul, however, becomes apparent through the reason as some kind of necessity, which is not the same as indispensability. This necessity should be some kind of criterion used by people, but Heraclitus is aware that they make mostly no use of reason.¹² They are able to live, but their life has no value. The necessity is firstly discovered in the soul as the proper measure/proportion of the reason to emotions, and then between soul and body. Thus it is possible to notice necessity in the phenomenal reality in spite of the fact that it is ever changing. The “new man” (human being without the soul of the barbarian – DK 22 B 107) is now able to see the proper measure in the world recognized through the senses; one is able to see the *kosmos* ruled by the universal reason (*Logos*). The effect of the epistemological process of introspection is not only that the structure of the world is reflected in the subject [*cosmos* – *microcosmos*], but also that the latter is dependent on and subordinated to the former. The *Logos* and the measure are then the principal categories, by which the subject and the universe are connected, and it can be said that both have really the same or nearly the same meaning (they are certainly mutually determinative). Taken on the ontological level *Logos* as the measure organizes the cosmos as the proper structure; taken on the epistemological level *Logos* as the measure constitutes human cognitive activity as the subordinated to the rational, and on the moral level it becomes the criterion for moral action.¹³ However, according to Heraclitus, every activity done at each level can be also described in moral terms. When something in the universe (e.g. the Sun – DK 22 B 94) oversteps the given measure, a state of cosmic injustice appears; it means disturbing the proper/good structure of the cosmos. Being in harmony with the measure can be treated then not only as a definition of what it is to be just, but also of what it is to be good. So, it seems possible that the source of measure (or measure itself), namely *Logos*, is the good. If we

¹¹ See DK 22 B 101; B 113; B 116.

¹² DK 22 B 1; B 2.

¹³ It also concerns political activity. In the philosophy of Heraclitus, one can see a demand that every state should be governed only by those who know the essence of reality, act according to the rule regulating the correctness of the macro- and microcosmos and are able to translate this rule into the laws that regulate human behaviour.

assume that there is a plurality of values in the Heraclitean philosophy (wisdom, justice etc.), *Logos* would represent the highest Good.

3. Democritus of Abdera

The problem of the Good does not appear in the philosophy of Democritus in the ontological context. It can, however, be examined in connection with an atomistic ontology. Democritean principles (*atomoi*), as is well known, are characterized only by a few features (*indivisibility, shape, size, arrangement, position* – DK 67 A 6; A 14; DK 68 A 38) and none of them can be considered axiologically. This means that values belong generally to the ethical and eudaimonological sphere. In the case of Democritus, we are, then, dealing with goods [*tagatha*] and not the Good, although the philosopher also uses the singular term “good”.

Democritus is considered to be an author of the first ethical system based on the deliberations of nature [*phusis*], and not on the religious assumptions.¹⁴ His position in ethics can be described as objectivism and relativism. That means that there is no absolute value, because every value is relative to the atomic structure. But there are some values that are not relativized to the sensations or states of the individual person or the group. As he says: “For all men, the same is good and true; but the pleasant is different for different men”.¹⁵ How to interpret this enigmatic statement? One must find out what is true, and what is pleasant for Democritus. It seems that pleasure here cannot be interpreted as the criterion of good. So it has to be the brief and short-lived pleasure of the body, which is not something beneficial/good [*chrēston*].¹⁶ There is, however, another kind of pleasure connected with the ideal state called *euthumia* or *euestō*.¹⁷ This state comes to be through the moderation of enjoyment [*metriotēs terpsios*] and a harmony of life [*summetriē biou*].¹⁸ Moderation and harmony have to occur on three different but connected levels. The first level concerns the soul itself, the second concerns

¹⁴ W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. II: *The Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (Cambridge 1965), p. 489; G. Vlastos, ‘Ethics and Physics in Democritus’, *Philosophical Review*, 56 (1946), p. 62; D. Dembińska-Siury, *Demokrytejska nauka szczęśliwego życia*, [in:] J. Gajda, A. Orzechowski, D. Dembińska-Siury, *Prawda – Język – Szczęście. Studia z filozofii starożytnej* (Wrocław 1992), p. 113.

¹⁵ DK 68 B 69: *anthrōpōis pasi tōuton agathon kai alēthes: hēdu de allōi allo*. K. Freeman (*Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford 1948), p. 101) translates it: “For all men, good and true are the same; but pleasant differs for different men”. This fragment is not contained among the fragments acknowledged as genuine by C.W.W. Taylor (*The Atomists. Leucippus and Democritus. Fragments*, (Toronto–Buffalo–London 1999)), but it occurs among the testimonia (*testi relativi alla dottrina*) in the newest collection by W. Leszl (139.4. *I primi atomisti. Raccolta dei testi che riguardano Leucippo e Democrito* (Firenze 2009)).

¹⁶ DK 68 B 235 (= D 99 Taylor = 141.2 Leszl): “All who derive their pleasures from the stomach, overstepping due season in eating or drinking or sexual pleasure, have pleasures that are but brief and short-lived, (*that is*), only while they are eating and drinking, but pains that are many. For this desire is always present for the same things, and when people get what they desire, the pleasure passes quickly, and they have nothing good for themselves except a brief enjoyment...” (translated by K. Freeman).

¹⁷ DK 68 B 4 (= D 26 Taylor = 132.1 Leszl).

¹⁸ DK 68 B 191 (= D 55 Taylor = 137.1 Leszl). This state is described in the testimonia as *ataraksiē* (DK 68 A 167), *gelanōs* (DK 68 A 1).

its connection with the body, and the third concerns the relation with the external world. But every level concerns what is true – namely the atoms or the atomic structures, which should be arranged in a proper (moderate and harmonious) way. There should be no disproportion between these levels and they should create unity.¹⁹ As Democritus says: “It is good, not to do no wrong, but not even to wish to”.²⁰ The relations between human beings should be proper, that is to say, they should be subordinated to justice. But this subordination must be based on the proper internal state of the soul. There are two ways of becoming a good man. The first is to be good from nature, the second is to become so through education [*didachē*], by which human nature is improved and made anew.²¹ The process of becoming good is anything but easy. A human being has to search what the goods are to attain them, and it comes to him or her with effort.²² To search means here intellectual activity, to attain means practical action, and the goods can be both internal and so-called external values. According to Democritus external things can be goods, and if they are so, they should be priced and estimated properly after their achieving, because they are gifts of the gods.²³ Thus, the goodness of a good thing does not depend on limited temporal existence and limited knowledge of the individual or group, but it has its source in the eternal (but not timeless) and perfect being. This objective value cannot be changed, but it does not guarantee that all states of things in the world are good, because the subject-object relationship must still be taken into consideration. Even a good thing can be a cause of good or evil, if someone knows or does not know how use it.²⁴ Once more, then, it turns out that proper/good/true structure of the soul, when it is devoted to intellectual activity, is sufficient to face adversities (evils) and perhaps even to fight against evil or at least defend against it.²⁵

In this way, one can understand the statement about the identity of good and true, and its consequences. The proper/true state of the given structure is

¹⁹ This unity is represented by the inseparable threesome: to think well [*to eu logidzesthai*] – to speak well [*to eu legein*] – to do well what one should [*to eu prattein ha dei*]; (DK 68 B 2 = 191.1 Leszl).

²⁰ DK 68 B 62 (= 160.1 Leszl); translated by C.C.W. Taylor (*The Atomists...*, p. 236). See also DK 68 B 68 (= 163.6 Leszl) and B 79 (167.5 Leszl).

²¹ DK 68 B 242 (= 169.5 Leszl) and B 33 (= 171.1 Leszl).

²² DK 68 B 108 (= 173.5 Leszl).

²³ DK 68 B 175 (= 148.1 Leszl).

²⁴ DK 68 B 173 (= 145.2 Leszl): “Evils accrue to people from good things, when one does not know how to direct the good things or posses them advantageously. So it is not right to judge such things as evils, but as goods; and being able to make use of good things is also a protection (*alkē*) against evils, if one so chooses” (translated by C.C.W. Taylor). The word “*alkē*” means not only “defence” (“protection”), but also “fight” (“battle”). The latter active meaning is not accepted in the translations, but it seems to be possible.

²⁵ DK 68 B 172 (= 145.1 Leszl): “Those same things from which we get good can also be for us a source of hurt. For instance, deep water is useful for many purposes, and yet again harmful; for there is danger of being drowned. A technique has therefore invented: instructions in swimming” (translated by K. Freeman). The idea of fighting against evil could be based on the interpretation of the fragment B 173 quoted in the preceding footnote.

always and for all people good. What is more, it is also pleasant or the supremely pleasurable state.²⁶

4. The Sophists

The philosophical idea that refused to grant any ontological status to the good is taken up and developed in new directions by the sophists, who are regarded as representatives of the so-called “Greek” or “Athenian Enlightenment”. The sophistic movement, as is well known, flourished in Greece during the fifth century BC. Being both a philosophical trend and a cultural phenomenon, this movement is probably one of the hardest to interpret. Similarly, as in the case of other presocratic philosophers, we have only fragments and other pieces of evidence to rely on, and many of them are preserved in the works of Plato, a violent opponent of the sophists.²⁷

4A. PROTAGORAS OF ABDERA.

Protagoras is considered to be the first of the sophists. He was an author of, among others, the following writings: *Peri theōn*, *Peri tēs en archēi katastaseōs* (the content is probably contained in the Plato’s dialogue *Protagoras*) and *Alētheia ē kataballontes* (known from Plato’s dialogue *Theaetetus*).²⁸ The surviving fragments of his works show that he was acquainted with Heraclitean and Eleatic philosophy, but there is no evidence that enables us to identify his teachers with certainty.

One of the most famous fragments to survive from Protagoras is the statement called the *homo-mensura doctrine*: “Of all things the measure is man, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not”.²⁹ The term “good” does not appear explicitly in this statement, but its axiological interpretation was already suggested by one of the ancient philosophers. It seems advisable to examine the meaning of the object of the sentence, which is the Greek word *chrēma*. It does not mean “the thing itself”, because Greeks described such a thing by the word *pragma*,³⁰ but “the thing in some relationship to man”.³¹ According to Aristotle, when the subject is interpreted as the individual with his or her beliefs [*dokein*], a consequence of this is twofold. Firstly, the existence of something

²⁶ D. Gibbon, ‘Pleasure as the “Criterion” in Democritus’, *Phronesis*, 5 (1960), pp. 75–77; G. Vlastos, ‘Ethics and Physics and Democritus’, *Philosophical Review*, 54 (1945), pp. 582–585.

²⁷ G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge 1981), pp. 1–4; G. Reale, *Historia filozofii starożytnej*, t. I: *Od początków do Sokratesa*, transl. E.I. Zieliński (Lublin 1993), pp. 235–240; J. Gajda, *Sofiści* (Warszawa 1989), pp. 7–15.

²⁸ See Diogenes Laertius IX 50–56 (DK 80 A 1). There are also fragments two other speeches: *Epitaphios* and *Olimpikos logos*.

²⁹ DK 80 B 1; translated by R.K. Sprague (*The Older Sophists* (Columbia 1972)). The Protagorean thesis has caused much controversy among commentators. Many of the interpretations are presented in the paper: B. Huss, ‘Der Homo-Mensura Satz des Protagoras. Ein Forschungsbericht’, *Gymnasium*, 103 (1996), pp. 229–257.

³⁰ The word *pragma* is used by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. math.* VII 60 = DK 80 B 1) in his paraphrase of Protagoras’ words.

³¹ The word *chrēma* is derived from the verb *chraomai*, which signifies, among others, “to be in want”, “to have”, “to use”.

is identified with believing that something exists; secondly, the law of the excluded middle is violated. The latter is exemplified by evil and good.³² It is clear, then, that Aristotle's testimony allows us to interpret the *chrēma* as something good.³³ In light of what has been said, it can be stated that for Protagoras everything is presented qualitatively, and the quality is always relative to the subject. What he means, however, is not that "the thing itself" does not exist; rather, he says that such a thing must be excluded from taking part in philosophical research, because there is no acceptable criterion for the existence of something. A good example is the following fragment from *On the gods*: "Concerning the gods I cannot know either that they exist or that they do not exist [...] for there is much to prevent one's knowing: the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of man's life".³⁴ Man cannot be in contact with the gods, they are not *ta chrēmata* for any human being. Similarly, the same is true about the nature of all things [*phusis tōn pantōn*] that was the centre of attention of the philosophers called *phusikoi*. This is why neither gods nor nature determine what is good, and the good and goods, then, are not something absolute and objective. Because of a lack of direct formulation of the theory of good in the extant fragments of Protagoras' writings, we will try to reconstruct it on basis of the section in Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*, which probably contains a summary of the treatise *On the Original State of Things*.³⁵

According to Protagoras, human beings and animals were created by gods at the same time. To be able to save their lives Epimetheus has equipped all animals with the different skills and attributes (*inter alia*: speed, fur, fingernails), but humankind was left empty-handed. To help people Prometheus has given them some kind of wisdom [*sophia*], which was stolen from the gods. It has enabled man to develop speech and to discover how to obtain food and to find refuge from bad weather. The belief in God has come next. But human beings harmed one another and were killed by wild animals. The reason was that without the political skill [*technē politikē*] people were not be able to stop hurting each other and unite against the common enemy. To prevent mankind from becoming extinct Zeus has given via Hermes justice [*dikē*] and shame [*aidos*]. From this moment every man has them potentially to the same degree, and only their development enables people through the social contract to create civil communities. The evidence of the *Protagoras* strongly suggest that according Protagoras the good for human beings as individuals is strictly conditioned by the good of the society [*polis*] in which they live. Naturally, this good is not something abstract, but it is a reflection of the individuals' goods. In both cases, Protagoras identifies the good with happiness and it means that the good has ethical, eudaimonological and political dimensions.

In the light of this interpretation of the *homo mensura* statement the good is always related to the subject, and the treatise *Peri tēs en archēi katastaseōs* shows

³² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1062b 12–24 (DK 80 A 19).

³³ It is difficult, however, to agree with Aristotle's view that the subject of *homo mensura* is the individual. According to Plato (*Theaetetus* 161c–162e) the subject can be a species, a group of people or the individual.

³⁴ DK 80 B 4, translated by R.K. Sprague.

³⁵ Plato, *Protagoras*, 320c 8–323a 4. On the reliability of the source see f.i. J. Gajda, *Sofiści*, p. 95.

that the subject can be both the individual human being and the group of people. But it also reveals that according to Protagoras there should be a strong connection between good and two interpretations of the subject which can be understood as some kind of asymmetric relation: *if something is good for the group, it is also good for the individual; if, however, something is good for the individual, it need not be good for the group*. The asymmetry is possible also on a higher level, but only as far as the opposition between public/political and private is concerned: *If something is good for the political group, it is also good for the private group; if, however, something is good for the private group, it need not be good for the political group*.

If this interpretation is correct, it affects another important rule of Protagorean teaching, expressed in the treatise *The art of debating*: “on every issue there are two arguments opposed to each other”.³⁶ The rule can be understood now in a conditional and relative way. The two arguments are opposed and are equally strong in regard to their truth-value, only if the given issue is a political one; this means that a question *X* is disputed by two (or more) groups of citizens, whose only goal is to act in the interest of and on account of (the highest value) the good of the city-state. This kind of dispute can be only settled by reference to the power of rhetoric, and not to factual argumentation.

4B. GORGIAS OF LEONTINOI

The philosopher was born in Leontinoi, the city-state in the south of Sicily, about 483 BC. Empedocles of Acragas and the Eleatic philosophers were said to be his teachers. His philosophical ideas are reconstructed on the basis of one short treatise (*Peri tou mē ontos ē peri phuseos*), two speeches (*Helenēs egkōmion*, *Palamedous apologia*) and other short fragments and testimonies contained in Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias* among others. The two mentioned speeches are of special importance for the issue under consideration. *Encomium of Helen* is a typical example of a laudatory discourse, which was usually based on fictional material (the mythological stories were often the subjects of this kind of speech). From a rhetorical point of view, this kind of speech belongs to the epideictic genre (*epideiktikon genos*; *genus demonstrativum*). The genre provides patronage for laudatory discourse aimed at propagating the criteria of values, which were used in deliberative or forensic persuasion.³⁷ Such orations served often in the school of rhetoric to exercise rhetoric techniques (to apply the figures of thought and speech), because according to Roman literature theoretician Quintilianus “mind is thus employed about a multiplicity and variety of matters, while understanding is formed by the contemplation of good and evil”.³⁸

The aim of the speech is to defend Helen, who on the grounds of the Homeric epics could be accused of adultery and, consequently, of causing the Trojan war.

³⁶ DK 80 B 6a; translated by R.K. Sprague.

³⁷ M. Korolko, *Sztuka retoryki. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny* (Warszawa 1990), p. 48.

³⁸ Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria*, II 4, 20: *Namque et ingenium exercetur multiplici variaeque materia et animus contemplatione recti praeque formatur*. English translation: Quintilianus, *On the Teaching of Speaking and Writing. Translations from Books One, Two and Ten of Institutio Oratoria*, J.J. Murphy (ed.) (Carbondale 1987).

Gorgias tries to persuade the reader (or the listener) that there are only a few reasons for Helen's committing the "crime":

1. The Will of Fate [*tuchē*], decision of the gods and vote of Necessity [*anagkē*];
2. Reduced by force;
3. Seduced by words;
4. Possessed by love.³⁹

The sophist proves that any of the reasons makes Helen not guilty of the charges. When explaining the fourth reason, Gorgias mentions the good. He says that the source of love is sight,⁴⁰ which produces desire first, and then love. Sight is used as a gateway, which is the door for the sensations to reach the soul. Some sensations can, for example, overcome human beings with terror, so they stop obeying the law which establishes what is good [*agathon*] and fine [*kalon*].⁴¹ It is worth mentioning here briefly that a very close connection between the fine and the good [*kalokagathia*] prevails in Greek mentality and it can be implicitly found already in the poetic work of Pindar (VI/V century BC). According to this poet, the good and the fine/beauty, together with wisdom, wealth and youth, are components of the aristocratic virtue [*aretē*] highly regarded by Pindar. From the fragment of Gorgias' speech, it can be concluded that the conception of good that is presented here can be seen as a part of sophistic teaching characterized by the opposition between: "by law" [*thesei*] and "by nature" [*phusei*].⁴² The good is not connected to the ontological level of principles, but to the subjective, often individual, conditions of our cognition. Men, their sensations and their mental and attitudinal presentations determine what is good, and because the sensations and their presentment are conditioned on the circumstances and they can change together with state of affairs, the judgement of what is good can be altered as well. And only written or unwritten acts of agreement [*nomoi*] between the individuals or groups of people can provide the values with a relative constancy.

The second speech, *The defence of Palamedes*, presents the methodical argumentation quoted by the mythological hero Palamedes against the charge of treason. The word "good" does not appear here, but there is talk of goods [*tagatha*] and good people. The goods are, generally speaking, the possible positive effects of human action.⁴³ They are something possessed by someone, and if someone is wise, and this means for the sophist that someone has to be sagacious, he or she would never prefer any evil to these goods.⁴⁴ To be wise does not signify to be perfect in every respect, because it happens even to the wise (i.e. good) man to make a mistake. Being aware of it, he or she should be marked by caution and

³⁹ DK 82 B 11; §31–33. The translation of the speech is taken from R.K. Sprague, *The Older Sophist*, pp. 50–54.

⁴⁰ There is the possibility of Empedocles' influence here.

⁴¹ DK 82 B 11; §98–106. The example is war and the law establishes what is good and fine in the battle.

⁴² G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*, pp. 111–130; J. Gajda, *Prawo natury i umowa społeczna w filozofii przedsokratejskiej* (Wrocław 1986), pp. 187–222.

⁴³ DK 82 B 11a, 105–110 and 172–183.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 166–171.

respect for the truth. As well, one should protect one's own reputation, which is of even higher value than life.⁴⁵

To analyze how Gorgias understands the good and goods it can be helpful also to consider the statements made by the sophists in Plato's dialogue, whose title is taken from the sophist's name. The enemies of the sophistic movement have accused the sophists of corrupting the minds and souls of Greeks (especially young men). According to them, the corruption was to consist in teaching that there is no absolute good or goods. It was based on this as well as on teaching rhetoric without suitable moral foundation, and giving people an instrument to argue and win regardless of truth and rightness. Thanks to rhetoric and eristic, it is possible *ton hēttō logon kreitō poiein*. But it is important to realize that this Greek expression can be understood in two ways:

- 1) To make the worse case a better one;
- 2) To make the weaker case a stronger one.

In Plato's dialogue⁴⁶, however, Gorgias denies that he teaches men how to make the worse case a better and he also stresses clearly and categorically that the rhetorician can indeed persuade anyone of everything, "but he should use rhetoric justly as well, as any competitive craft should be used. But I think that if someone acquires rhetorical craft and then does injustice with this power and craft, we should not detest his teacher and expel him from the city. For he transmitted his craft for a just man to use, but the pupil is using it the opposite way; and so it is just to detest, expel, and kill the one who used it wrongly, but not his teacher".⁴⁷

So, we can say that Gorgias clearly distinguishes between good and evil, and the difference should be seen by anyone both on the individual (private) and the group (political) level. But in any case all values are determined and conditioned by the circumstances. This idea can be also found in the fragment of the *Funeral Oration* (*Epitaphios*), where in paying tribute to Athenians the sophist attributes them two seemingly contradictory traits: kindness and cruelty.⁴⁸ But how it is it possible to be kind and cruel at the same time? Gorgias says: Athenians are kind to the weak and cruel to their enemies. The citizens of Athens are able then to perceive some activities undertaken by the citizens of other cities and to interpret them as weakness or hostility. The former is good for Athens, because it does not threaten their hegemony, and it makes it possible to be kind to a weak city. The latter is something evil and therefore war should be declared on a hostile city-state and its citizens treated cruelly. The criterion of judgement is the subjective business of

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 218–233.

⁴⁶ It should be stressed that while Plato refuses to acknowledge the sophistic movement as a philosophy and generally estimates it negatively, the philosopher's attitude to individual sophists is nevertheless varied. In the light of the dialogues it is undeniable that he values and respects Protagoras and Gorgias, he makes good natured fun of Prodicus, but Hippias, Euthyphro or Dionisodorus come in for harsh criticism.

⁴⁷ Plato, *Gorgias*, 457b 4–c 3. I use the following English translation: Plato, *Gorgias*, T. Irwin (transl.) (Oxford 1979).

⁴⁸ DK 82 B 6.

the Athenians (to keep hegemony) and the assessment of the circumstances. But if the state of affairs is changed, this judgement can also be altered.

4C. PRODICUS OF CEOS

To reconstruct Prodicus' conception of the Good, we begin with the story of the choice of Heracles. It is probably a part of the lost writing entitled *Seasons* (*Horai*).⁴⁹ It has been preserved for us by Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*. Being at a crossroads as a young man, Heracles is ready to make a choice between two ways of life. Two women approach him. One of them has a splendid look and noble nature. Her body is graced by purity, her glance by modesty, and her whole figure by modesty and a white robe. The second is well fed, almost fat, and with exaggerated make-up. Her posture seems to be straighter than it is in nature, eyes wide open, and the gown so trimmed to stress a young look as much as possible.⁵⁰

The latter's name is Vice [*kakia*] and she suggests that Heracles should choose the easy life full of bodily pleasures. The former woman – Virtue [*aretē*] – advises him to pick out of the ways of life the one burdened with efforts and deprived of pleasures in the beginning. This is probably because the human being has to be trained through work and effort to break free from the original state of wildness (dissoluteness, unbridledness) and to become a civilized human being. This kind of life is crowned with becoming a doer of good [*agathon ergatēs*], and Virtue itself becomes more excellent thanks to it. To attain it effort is necessary, because – as Virtue says – “of all things good and fair, the gods give nothing to man without toil and effort”.⁵¹ She argues also that there is no good in a life governed by Vice, and people, who are regarded as good disdain it as much as they respect Virtue. It seems this story shows that according to Prodicus the opposition between vice and virtue should be understood as the opposition of pleasure to hardship. It turns out, however, that to live according to virtue does not mean to live without pleasure at all, but simply with another kind of pleasure. The pleasure of vice is nothing more than pleasure of *pleonexia*,⁵² whereas virtue offers a pleasure of moderation, of reminiscences and of daily works among other things. The effort is something good, indeed, but only in the relative sense, because it is just the way,⁵³ which can lead someone to something much better – to happiness. The Virtue lists three components of the happy life: to be in the gods' good graces, to win friends' love, and to deserve the city's honour.⁵⁴ Virtue's whole speech shows

⁴⁹ The title was understood by Nestle ('Die Horen des Prodikos', *Hermes*, 71 (1936), p. 151) literally as the names of goddesses. Whereas Gomperz (*Sophistik und Rhetorik. Das Bildungsideal des EU LEGEIN in seinem Verhältnis zur Philosophie des V. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig-Berlin 1912), p. 100) interprets this title metaphorically ("Jahreszeiten" or "Tageszeiten").

⁵⁰ DK 84 B 2 (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II 1, 22, 1–9).

⁵¹ *Ibidem* (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II 1, 28, 1–2). I use the following translation: Xenophon, *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, E.C. Marchant, O.J. Todd (transl.) (Cambridge-London 1923).

⁵² More see H.-O. Weber, *Die Bedeutung und Bewertung der Pleonexie von Homer bis Isokrates* (Bonn 1967).

⁵³ The condition *sine qua non* seems to be in this case to bear and to overcome the efforts. The life of a man who did not make it, is described in DK 82 B 9 (Ps.-Plato, *Axiarchos*, 366b–367c).

⁵⁴ DK 84 B 2 (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II 1, 33).

that according to Prodicus the good is located only in the sphere of *praxis*, but, what seems to be philosophically more important, there is no argument (besides the general sophistic attitude to reality perhaps) why good should be restricted to this sphere and why Heracles (man) should choose this way of life.

In this light, and considering the fact that work plays such important role in human life and this kind of human activity can produce financial benefits, we are justified in asking about their value. An answer to this question can be found in a Pseudo-Platonic dialog *Eryxias*, which is also known as *On wealth*. A statement attributed to Prodicus has it that the wealth is the good [*agathon*] for beautiful and good people [*kaloï kagathoi*], that is to say, for the people who know how to use it. And this means that the value of things [*pragmata*] depends on the value of the people who use them.⁵⁵ Consequently, wealth itself should be recognized as axiologically neutral and being of instrumental value for human being probably gains its value from the ends that it is used to achieve.

4D. ANTIPHON OF RHAMNUS.

Antiphon⁵⁶ is the representative of the so-called second generation of sophists and his works are preserved only in fragments. The conception of the good is a consequence of the opposition between the law of nature [*phusei*] and conventional law [*nomoi*]. Antiphon assumes that the present state of society – its political system, religion, legal, ethical and moral norms – is a result of a social contract [*nomos*]. According to him, the state is bad, because every act of agreement distorts nature. An example of the distortion of nature and the bad state is the division between free and slave, because it is true that all people are free from nature. This natural freedom means also equality between individuals.⁵⁷ Contrary to Protagoras, the natural state seems here to be something good and it does not demand to be developed by *paideia*.⁵⁸ For Antiphon describes the present state of society and assesses it negatively, his main demand is to act according to nature. Nature offers things which are helpful [*ophelein*], and human beings could suffer less than they really do and they could more pleasure than they have now.⁵⁹ Only nature can provide justice, because *nomoi* are ruled by the *ouden malon* principle, and even if some judge would pronounce the right sentence, it could be also a source of evil (hate for the judge for example).⁶⁰ Justice and the good life in society is possible only through concord [*homonoia*]. The fragments of the writing *On Concord* allow in

⁵⁵ DK 82 B 8 (Ps.-Plato, *Eryxias*, 397d–398c).

⁵⁶ On the so-called 'Antiphon question' see J. Gajda, *Sofiści*, pp. 157–158. The most recent collection of the fragments is: G.J. Pendrick, *Antiphon the Sophist. The Fragments* (Cambridge 2002).

⁵⁷ According to Antiphon the equality between men is assured by the same anatomical structure among other things. See DK 87 B 44B, II 27–32.

⁵⁸ It seems that the fragment B 60 can speak against this statement, but it can be argued that the fragment concerns only the physical education or, if we interpret it in the broader context, it concerns the *present* state of the human being, which should be educated by sophist to know that the natural state is good.

⁵⁹ DK 87 B 44, IV 19–22; V 19–21 (= F 44 Pendrick). The hedonistic aspect present in Antiphon's thought (probably exaggerated) can be also found in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* I 6, 10 (see DK 87 A 3 = T 1 Pendrick and his commentary p. 228).

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, VI (= F. 44 Pendrick).

outline to point out some of the examples of this state. One of them is marriage, but only with an appropriate [*epitēdeia*] woman. The relationship is described as the friendship in which both individuals “think the same and breathe the same” [*isa phronountas isa pneontas*]. In this context, *homonoia* seems to mean a full unity in the mental and physical dimension, and as the result, there appears a state of pleasure [*hēdonē*].⁶¹ Very important is the intellectual activity of human being – to think with fine sagacity [*to phronein kalōs*], because it serves to guarantee that human beings are able to participate and to save the goods [*agatha*] given to them by god.⁶²

4E. *Dissoi logoi*

The short anonymous treatise called *Twofold Arguments* was probably written around 400 BC. in Doric dialect. Its content refers to the Protagorean work *Antilogiai*.⁶³ It is possible that the work is a summary of sophistic teaching made in a systematic way by one of the sophists’ pupils. Analysis of the content shows that the author must have heard or read (?) teachings of Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias. It is composed of nine chapters, but only five of them bear any titles:

1. *On good and bad* [*Peri agathō kai kakō*];
2. *On seemly and shameful* [*Peri kalou kai aischrou*];
3. *On just and unjust* [*Peri dikaïou kai adikou*];
4. *On truth and falsehood* [*Peri alatheias kai pseudeos*];
5. [no title] – it summarizes and complements the questions considered in the previous sections;
6. *On whether wisdom and moral excellence are teachable* [*Peri tas sophias kai tas aretas, ai didakton*];
7. [no title] – it is proved that government offices should not be filled by drawing lots;
8. [no title] – the sophistic skill is described along with its relation to values and how it works in the society;
9. [no title] – section devoted to the art of mnemonic.⁶⁴

At the beginning of the first chapter, two ways of understanding the good and bad are presented. Both can be found in Greek thought:

1. the good is something other than the bad;
2. the good and bad are the same, because the same thing is good for some people and bad for some other or the same thing is good for man at one time and bad for the same man at other time.⁶⁵

⁶¹ DK 87 B 49 (= F 49 Pendrick). The relationship between more distant individuals is described by the verb *charidzomai*. See DK 87 B 54 (= F 54 Pendrick).

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ T.M. Robinson, *Introduction*, [in:] T.M. Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments. An Edition of Dissoi Logoi* (New York 1979), pp. 34–77; cf. T.M. Conley, ‘Dating the So-Called “Dissoi Logoi”’. A Cautionary Note’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 5 (1985), pp. 59–65. The newest edition and translation: *Dissoi logoi. Zweierlei Ansichten. Text – Übersetzung – Kommentar*, A. Becker, P. Scholz (hrsg.) (Berlin 2004).

⁶⁴ J. Gajda, *Teorie wartości...*, pp. 144–149. Polish translation in: J. Gajda, *Sofiści*, pp. 297–309.

⁶⁵ *Dissoi Logoi*, 1-4 (DK 90 B 1). Robinson (*Contrasting Arguments*, p. 151) stresses rightly the ambiguity of the second thesis.

In a dialectical disquisition, the anonymous author of the treatise is firstly in favour of the second thesis and he or she argues for it using inductive reasoning and examples from the world we live in or from the history. Although the second thesis allows an extremely subjectivistic or individualistic relativization of good, the examples imply that a more measured position is taken, according to which a group of people determines what is good or bad. Then, the author starts to argue for the first thesis using indirect reasoning: *if the good and bad were the same, we would not know what is good and what is bad; we know what is good and what is bad, so the good and bad are not the same*. This general proof is also supported by a series of examples. The author is also a proponent of this thesis, but while he or she recognizes the difference between the good and the bad, he proves incapable of determining them (i.e., of answering the question what the good is [*ti esti to agathon*]).

Conclusions

The change in the conception of the Good before Plato presents itself in the following way: it seems that one can see a connection between the Good and the One and the dependence of the Best (*ariston*) on the Good in the first trends of Greek philosophy. The connection is still present in the philosophy of Heraclitus, but he has made a very important “revolution”: he did away with the absolute difference between good and evil, and this diversification could be applied only to humans beings and their ways of knowing reality. But it is still an objective fact that people *distinguish* between good and evil and its importance for them. The philosopher can only be aware that the difference is not *absolutely* significant, and, what is more, it does not exist on the cosmic level, because the ontological entirety – *kosmos* – is simply good. Democritus has carried out another reduction. Everything that really exists is beyond the ethical order. It is, like in Heraclitus’, a man’s domain. The good is something objective, but not absolute, because it is connected with the truth, which is accessible to every human being. The reduction of the good to the purely subjectivistic area was made by the members of the so-called Sophistic Movement. Things for them are neutral, and the good appears as the effect of human activity. It is not, however, something objective, because it depends on the judgment of the individual person or a group of people.

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The Conception of *alēthēs anthrōpos* in Plotinus' *Enneads**

Abstract

The paper presents the ontological aspects of the conception of *alēthēs anthrōpos* and the problem of relations between individual human being and hypostases Psyche and Nous. According to Enn. I. 1 [53] the nature of man is twofold – man is *zōon* on the one hand, and man is *psuchē* on the second. But in the light of Plotinus' monopsychism the genuine dimension of our being owns a beyond-individual character. The real capability of unification with *Nous* is one of the activities inherently connected with dynamical nature of Soul. The levels of human consciousness are identical with the gradation of activities of *Psychē* taken as hypostasis and *alēthēs anthrōpos* represents the epistrophical return to Intellect.

Preface

The penultimate in chronological order, the 53rd tractate of the *Enneads*, being the opening text in the Plotinian work by Porphyry of Tyre, is entirely devoted to anthropological issues. The title question: *What is the living being, and what is man?*, introduces a tangle of problems connected with defining the relationships between the body and individual soul, Soul-hypostasis [*psuchē*] and intellect [*nous*] which are discussed in consecutive treatises. This tractate somewhat determines predominant issues in the *Enneads* wherein anthropo-psychological problems are constantly present, over a third of the whole Plotinian work being directly dedicated to them. It would be difficult to indicate a treatise which utterly omits the aforementioned questions, considering that frequently Plotinus' writing style is switching from even the most abstract problems or logico-metaphysical discussions to remarks on man and the world of his inner experience.¹

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 4 [4] (2009), pp. 61–70

¹ See e.g. *Enn.* VI. 7 [38] wherein the discussion on the difference between the One and Intellect and the applicability of cataphatic predicates to the One, is enriched by digressions on self-knowledge and mystical experience. It is not an exception but a rule for the Plotinian style. Greek and English from the *Enneads* as per the edition: Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. A.H. Armstrong, vol. 1–7 (London 1966–1988).

The intricacy of the Plotinian disquisition, and the frequent contradictions which occur among particular approaches, make the answer to the question of human nature appear as a highly problematic issue. It is reflected in researchers' disputes over such problems as the conception of soul, ideas of individual beings,² the difference between Intellect and Soul³ or mystical union.⁴ They show a number of specific problems which with the Plotinian anthropology is involved. In this context it is worth mentioning that the Plotinian conception of man and Soul⁵ was already perceived in a critical way by the next generations of Neo-Platonic philosophers, which found expression *inter alia* in Iamblichus'⁶ and Proclus' stances. Apparently, the need was discerned to define Plotinus' vision⁷ more precisely, which amounted to the separation of an individual soul from the intellect – entering into a polemic against the view on the natural, as resulting from the very essence of the soul, possibility of unifying with the higher ontic layers – Intellect and the One [*hen*].⁸

However, grasping the Plotinian conception of man is not possible without establishing the theoretical implications connected with the notion of *alēthēs anthrōpos*. This notion seems to be crucial, based on the fact that it highlights the crucial assumption of Plotinus' method, that the path of the inner experience of man leads to an encounter with the hypostatic structure of reality, which is the object of theoretical reflection. Because an object of philosophical examination is also the reality which is able to apprehend a specific experience crowned by the act *unio mystica*. The conception of the "true man" shows that in Plotinus' depiction, a human being is distinguished by a multilayer structure, furthermore it touches on the problematic issue of merging of what is immaterial and material, modes of presence of what is bodiless in what is bodily. In the article, only the ontological aspect of the conception *alēthēs anthrōpos* will be considered, whereas ethical and mystical aspects of this problem will be omitted.

² See H.J. Blumenthal, 'Did Plotinus believe in Ideas of Individuals?', *Phronesis* 11 (1966), pp. 61–80; J.M. Rist, 'Forms of Individuals in Plotinus', *Classical Quarterly*, 63 (1963), pp. 223–231; P. Kalligas, 'Forms of Individuals in Plotinus. A Re-Examination', *Phronesis*, 42 (1997), pp. 206–227.

³ See H.J. Blumenthal, *Soul, World-Soul and Individual Soul in Plotinus*, [in:] *Le Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1971), pp. 55–66.

⁴ See J.M. Rist, 'Back to the Mysticism of Plotinus. Some More Specifics', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 27 (1989), pp. 183–197.

⁵ H.J. Blumenthal (*Plotinus in Later Platonism*, [in:] H.J. Blumenthal, R.A. Markus (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought. Essays in Honour of A.H. Armstrong* (London 1981), pp. 212–222) claims that it is in the realm of the psychological conception that one of the most important differences between Plotinus' neoplatonism and late neoplatonism is revealed.

⁶ See Iamblichus, *De Anima*, J.F. Finamore, J.M. Dillon (eds.) (Leiden–Boston–Köln 2002), pp. 30, 365. 2–366. 20.

⁷ Although it is certainly not the only motive for abandoning Plotinian findings in the realm of psychological theory, the fact of Iamblichus' acceptance of theurgy is sometimes recognized as its main reason. It implied the rejection of the thesis of integral affinity of man to noetic dimensions in order to justify the value of theurgical practices. See R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London 1995), pp. 118–123; G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (Pennsylvania 1995), p. 11.

⁸ See Iamblichus, *De Anima*, 365. 12–366. 20.

***Alēthēs anthrōpos* and the relationship between soul and body**

In *Enn.* I. 1 [53] Plotinus determines the relation between the man apprehended as a living being [*zōion*], and the man [*anthrōpos*] apprehended as soul [*psuchē*] which uses the body as a tool [*organon*].⁹ In *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 7, 17–20 he claims that:

[...] but *we* in our presidency over the living being, are what extends from his point upwards. But there will be no objection to calling the whole thing a *living being*; the lower parts are something mixed, the part which begins on the level of thought is, I supposed, the true man [*ho anthrōpos ho alēthēs*] [...].¹⁰

That true man has then the bodiless nature, “since man coincides with the rational soul” [*ontos tou anthrōpou tēi logikēi psuchēi*],¹¹ as Plotinus maintains further. Thereby he indirectly indicates the separateness of soul related to body of “true man”, which may bring astonishment because it consequently indicates the dual presence of soul in man. For it would not be body without forming activity of the Soul, and every living being is endowed with soul, therefore “mixed” soul [*mikton*] should be distinguished from “rational” soul¹². Body itself, as an element of the material world, that is an element of the order of becoming, [*kosmos aisthētos*] belongs to the sphere ordained by the World-Soul [*psuchē tou pantos*],¹³ and it also possesses a qualitative configuration which is the result of the activity of Soul-Nature [*phusis*] forming the world, according to the picture of the idea it has of itself, thanks to the World-Soul.¹⁴ Hence body is not only the reflection of idea’s reflection possessed by Soul, but also something pertaining to the animate universum, and thereby participating in the life of Soul-Nature [*phusis*] which represents a certain aspect of Soul [*psuchē*] hypostasis.¹⁵ Human body, likewise vegetal and animal bodies, is animated by an actual, individual soul, yet related neotically to Soul-hypostasis.¹⁶ In Plotinus’ depiction, the soul which shapes body and gives it a human type of formation does not suffice to explain what man is.

In *Enn.* II. 3 [52] Plotinus, while comparing the myth of the Moirai to Plato’s *Timaeus* 69 c, presents two dimensions of the soul – actually two souls – one, a subject of cosmic necessity, which he defines as “shadow” and another, free from bodily influence, which pertains to the neotic order:

So we must *fly from here* and *separate* ourselves from what has been added to us [*prosgegenēmenōn*], and not be the composite thing, the

⁹ See *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 3, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 108–109.

¹¹ *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 7, 22, p 110–111.

¹² I apply the notation of the word *soul* in lower case when an individual soul is in question and the notation in upper case *the Soul* for Soul in the general sense.

¹³ See *Enn.* III. 7 [2]. 13.

¹⁴ See *Enn.* III. 8 [30]. 3–4.

¹⁵ Plotinus repeats after Plato’s *Timaeus* 36 d that the Soul is not in body, but body is in the Soul, while certainly considering the participation in the causative power of the Soul and not the relations of spatial inclusion; see *Enn.* III. 9 [13]. 3. 1–4.

¹⁶ See *Enn.* IV. 7 [2]. 14. 1–8, p 390–391.

ensouled body [*mē to sōma epsuchōmenon*] in which the nature of body [*he sōmatos phusis*] (which has some trace of soul [*psuchēs ti ichnos*]) has the greater power, so that the common life belongs more to the body; for everything that belongs to this common life is bodily. But to the other soul, which is outside the body [*tēs d' heteras tēs ekso*], belongs the ascent to the higher world, to the fair and divine which no one master [*hōn oudeis kratei*], but either make use of it that he may be it and live by it, withdrawing himself; or else he is bereft of this higher soul and lives under destiny [*en heimarmenēi*] [...].¹⁷

The two types of soul represented here are two different kinds of activity of the Soul-hypostasis: “trace of soul” corresponds to the Soul-Nature, whereas “the other soul”, i.e. a soul external to body, corresponds to the Soul contemplating the intellect. This division of the souls can be described differently in the light of the principle *proodos – monē – epistrophē*, as the division in which “trace of soul” corresponds to “exit” activity – in other words, it is the result of causative causality representing the emanation activity of the Soul. On the other hand, the soul external in relation to body represents the epistrophic aspect, that is, returning to the source, to the essence. It is demonstrated in *Enn.* IV. 8 [6]. 4. 31–35 where Plotinus presents two poles of a unitary soul – related to the noetic world and the sensible world:

Souls, then, become, one might say, amphibious [*hoion amphibioi*], compelled to live by turns the life There [in Intellect – A.W.], and the life here [in body – A.W.]: those which are able to more in the company of Intellect live the life There more, but those whose normal condition is, by nature or chance, the opposite, live more the life here below.¹⁸

The deliberation over those types of the Soul from the side of consciousness dynamics¹⁹ is worth emphasizing here. Plotinus remarks in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 3, 1–6 that soul is to body like a craftsman to a tool, thus it does not have to accept its sensations. Thereby he opens the field for analyses of the consciousness which soul possesses in relation to body and the consciousness which belongs to the Soul in its essence, irrespective of the incarnate condition.²⁰ The Soul consciousness, or better still, its self-knowledge, is here *implicite* treated in a multilevel way. It is confirmed in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 7. 8–10 where Plotinus mentions that “of more value that we are, enter into the composition of the whole essence of man, which is made up of many elements”,²¹ in order to indicate then differences between

¹⁷ *Enn.* II. 3 [52]. 9. 20–28; Plotinus, *Ennead II*, pp. 74–75.

¹⁸ Plotinus, *Ennead IV*, pp. 410–411.

¹⁹ See G.S. Brett, *Historia psychologii [History of Psychology]*, trans. J. Makota (Warszawa 1969), pp. 179; E. Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, trans. J. Thomas (Chicago 1958), p. 57; E.R. Dodds, ‘Tradycja i dokonania własne w filozofii Plotyna’ [‘Tradition and Personal Achievements in the Philosophy of Plotinus’], trans. A. Przybysławski, *Edukacja Filozoficzna*, 20 (1995), p. 50; E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus and Soul-Body Dualism*, [in:] S. Everson (ed.), *Companions to Ancient Thought 2. Psychology*, (Cambridge 1991), pp. 144–165.

²⁰ Likewise in *Enn.* I. 4 [46]. 14–15.

²¹ Plotinus, *Ennead I*, pp. 108–109.

the type of perception [*aisthēsis*] inherent to soul and the type of perception that soul is present in the body. Likewise in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 10. 6–10 he emphasizes that human self is dual, one when the beast [*to thērion*] is included in man, and another is an extra corporeal element [*to hyper*]:

So *we* is used in two senses [*ditton oun to hēmeis*], either including the beast [*ē sunarithmoumenou tou thēriou*], or referring to that which even in our present life transcends it [*ē to hyper touto ēdē*]. The beast is the body which has been given life. But the true man [*alēthēs anthrōpos*] is different, clear of these affections; he has the virtues which belong to the sphere of intellect and have their seat actually in the separate soul [*en autēi tēi chōrizomenēi psuchēi hidruntai*], separate and separable even while it is still here below.²²

Also in this passage the distinction between man in body or soul in body and true man is based on the criterion of the soul's dependence on bodily sensations, like in *Enn.* II. 3 [52]. 9. 19–28, Plotinus again indicates specific freedom, independent of what is bodily as the determinant of the true nature of man.²³ Also the distinction between the soul separated from body and the soul living the life of the compound in *Enn.* I. 7 [54]. 3. 19–22 directs to two types of consciousness of an individual soul. Likewise in *Enn.* I. 8 [51]. 13–15 Plotinus, while considering the problem of the connection between soul and the genesis of evil, points out the possibility of changes in soul under the influence of contact with matter,²⁴ but at the same time he states that evil appears in soul through something which is not indivisible [*dia tou ouk amerous*], thus it concerns its relationship with the body. Since evil in soul is the result of its influence on matter, so is a certain state of its consciousness, submitting to false beliefs²⁵ and infirmity.²⁶

The distinction between the types of individual souls, considering the state of consciousness either related to body or free from the sensations of body, in terms of activity types characteristic of Soul-hypostasis, means that man can live the life of reflection, “trace [*ichnos*] of the Soul” (as an element of Nature) or live the life of the Soul in the substantial sense, only the latter corresponds to being *ho anthrōpos ho alēthēs*. Plotinus employs here the model of pattern – projection, proper to his metaphysical conception. The bodily dimension represents what is ontically weaker, what has been “radiated” from the Soul as the causal power typical of hypostasis, but still related to what is substantial.²⁷ Hence the descent

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 114–115.

²³ See S.R.L. Clarke, *Plotinus: Body and Soul*, [in:] L.P. Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge 1996), p. 276.

²⁴ See Th.G. Sinnige, ‘Plotinus on the Human Person and its Cosmic Identity’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 56 (2002), p. 293.

²⁵ See *Enn.* I. 8 [51].15. 19, p. , also in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 9. 21–22 Plotinus distinguishes the consciousness obscured by beliefs from the true consciousness of soul [*tēn ge kuriōs tēs psuchēs tēs alēthous dianoian*]. Likewise in *Enn.* V. 1 [10]. 1. 1–17, descent of souls [*tolma*] is explained in terms of unconsciousness, through the utter lack of knowledge [*pantelous agnoias*] of the divine nature of souls.

²⁶ See *Enn.* I. 8 [51]. 14.

²⁷ See *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 8.

of individual souls, living with awareness of what is lower, what is the presence of power in body but not its true, full nature.

Man in Intellect

In *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14. 17–23, Plotinus confirms the affinity of unitary souls to the noetic realm:

But we – who are we? Are we that which draws near and comes to be in time? No, even before this coming to be came to be we were there, man who were different, and some of us even gods [*theoi*], pure souls [*psuchai katharai*] and intellect united with the whole of reality [*nous sunēmmenos tēi hapasēi ousiai*], we were parts of intelligible, not marked off or cut off but belonging to the whole [*merē ontes tou noētou ouk aphōrismena oud' apotetmēmēna*]; and we are not cut off even now. But now another man [*anthrōpos allos*], wishing to exist [...].²⁸

Whereas in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 8. 1–8 after the prior statement that man is the rational soul²⁹ and determining how to understand the predicate *logistikon* with respect to a unitary soul and its relation to Intellect, Plotinus remarks:

I mean by *Intellect* not the state of the soul, which is one of the things which derive from Intellect, but Intellect itself [*auton ton noun*]. We possess his too, as something that transcends us. We have it either as common to all, or particular to ourselves both common and particular; common because it is without parts and one and everywhere the same, particular to ourselves because each has the whole of it in the primary part of the soul [*hekastos outon holon en psuchēi tēi prōtēi*]. So we also possess the forms in two ways, in our soul, in a manner of speaking unfolded and separated, in Intellect all together.³⁰

In this excerpt, man is understood as soul in body from a perspective of the bodily dimension³¹ and the relationship of soul and Intellect, although distinguished from the reasoning capacity, it is connected to what is common and not unitary. One should remember here that the previous chapter – *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 7 – contains the aforementioned passage on “true man” which could be easily connected with the conception, present in *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14, of the affinity of unitary souls to the substance of Intellect. Especially with respect to the difference between *anthrōpos allos* and souls in Intellect which brings to mind *ho anthrōpos*

²⁸ Plotinus, *Ennead VI. 1–5*, p. 317.

²⁹ See *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 7. 21–24.

³⁰ Plotinus, *Ennead I*, p. 111.

³¹ It is pointed out in further considerations in *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 8, in which Plotinus sticks to the tripartite division of reality in accordance with the order: the One, *kosmos noetos*, incarnate souls, and afterwards defines man as “the next but two” and composed of – he refers here to Plato’s *Timaios* 35a – from “the indivisible substance, that from above and from the substance divisible in bodies”.

ho alēthēs, “Other man” would refer to the incarnate condition of soul and “true man” to its affinity to the noetic order. Furthermore, the mention of “primary soul”, which is, as one may infer from the context, something which is “above us”, also substantiates the connection of this excerpt of *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 8 with the conception of “true man” and souls in Intellect. However, in contradistinction to *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14, in *Enn.* I. 1 [53] Plotinus does not mention the affinity of unitary souls to Intellect and he rather shows them in relation with Soul-hypostasis. It may be suggested by the already quoted statement from *Enn.* I. 1 [53]. 10. 5–10, which is about the virtues of the soul separated from body, and obviously Plotinus combines virtues with the Soul and not Intellect,³² which indicates that true man is combined here with the third hypostasis. Whereas the definition of soul as “separate and separable”, as well as the expression *alēthēs anthrōpos* point out that Plotinus employs here the distinction between the soul itself and the soul in body. “True man” then pertains here to the order of hypostasis *psuchē* and not to *nous*.

Nevertheless, in *Enn.* V. 7 [18]. 1. 15–25, while considering the ideas of individuals, Plotinus claims that it is not possible for various entities to be the realisation of only one and the same pattern (idea), and similarly it is not possible to explain all the differences which occur between them solely by the individuating activity of matter. Those statements may confirm the affinity of ideas of individual beings to Intellect, but Plotinus precedes them with the following observation:

But if the soul of each individual possesses the rational forming principles [*tous logous*] of all the individuals which it animates in succession, then again on this assumption, all will exist there [*pantes au ekei*]; and we do say that each soul possesses all the forming principles in the universe. If then the universe possesses the forming principles, not only of man but of all individual animals, so does the soul [...].³³

The first sentence from the quoted passage refers to, as one may presume, the incarnation cycle of a unitary soul. It goes through many entities because it animates many entities, and yet each of them has certain individual features which Plotinus does not want to explain only by means of the discriminant function of matter. The phrase *pantes au ekei* is the indication that these determinations originate from the noetic source. The author of *Enneades*, as John Michael Rist remarks, opts for the assumption of ideas of individuals but it does not mean that this individuality is to be implied in personal terms – on the contrary, it is only the individuality guaranteed by a specific type of determination.³⁴

However, it is worth putting those statements in the context of the assumption of monopsychism³⁵ which seems to be preponderant for the explanation of the relationship of a unitary soul to Intellect. Plotinus begins *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14.

³² See *Enn.* I. 2 [19]. 3. 31.

³³ *Enn.* V. 7 [18]. 1. 8–12; Plotinus, *Ennead V*, pp. 222–223.

³⁴ J.M. Rist, ‘Back to Mysticism of Plotinus...’, pp. 189–190.

³⁵ See P. Merlan, *Monopsychism. Mysticism. Metaconsciousness. Problems of the Soul in the Neoplatonist and Neoplatonic Tradition* (Hague 1963).

from the question: how it is possible that the Soul is only one and at the same time specific in every living being.³⁶ The assumption of monopsychism is backed up here by the argument of the lack of spatial limitations in the Soul, which entails different comprehension of parts or multitude from that in reference to physical things.³⁷ This characterization also applies to Intellect, thus the conception of monopsychism is connected with the assumption of the unity of the neotic world and the affinity of the Soul to this order³⁸. Plotinus – which is worth emphasizing in both tractates *On the presence of being, one and the same, everywhere as a whole* (*Enn.* VI. 4 [22] and *Enn.* VI. 5 [23]) – does not discuss the Soul from the viewpoint of otherness of its hypostatic nature in reference to the nature of Intellect. Quite the contrary, he highlights that its inherent type of one-multiplicity is the same as in case of Intellect and the psychic order is identical with the neotic order. However, he emphasizes differences which determine the division into the noetic sphere [*kosmos noētos*] and the sensible sphere [*kosmos aisthētos*] with respect to the criterion which is the type of relation occurring between the parts and the whole. For as long as things pertaining to the sensible world cannot be identical with one another, considering the spatial³⁹ and temporal⁴⁰ delimitations, then in reference to bodiless beings, the condition of identity of being entails the extinction of separation based on the differences of the parts because:

[...] that All [noetic realm – A.W.] the first and existent, does not go looking for place and is not at all in anything. It is certainly not possible for the All, being all, to fall short of itself, but it exists as self-fulfilled, and as being equal to itself. [...] And there is nothing surprising in *everywhere* meaning *in being* and *in itself* [...].⁴¹

Moreover:

If then God [noetic realm – A.W.] is everywhere, it is not possible that he should be divided; for then he would not still be everywhere, but each part of him would be on here and another there, and he would not still be one, as if one cuts a magnitude into many parts, it will be destroyed and all the parts not longer be that whole; and besides, he will be a body.⁴²

One should take just those reservations into consideration while making an attempt to determine the nature of unitary souls and the presence of “true man” in

³⁶ See *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14. 1.

³⁷ Plotinus repeats here in an abridged form what he justified more widely in the initial parts of this tractate. See *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 1–4.

³⁸ See *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14. 2–16.

³⁹ See *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 3–4.

⁴⁰ See *Enn.* VI. 5 [23]. 2.

⁴¹ *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 2. 13–25; *Ibidem*, p. 279. Plotinus in *Enn.* VI. 5 [23]. 2–7 warns against transferring the comprehension of actual division with regard to the sensible sphere into the noetic sphere.

⁴² *Enn.* VI. 5 [23]. 4. 5–10; *ibidem*, pp. 334–335.

Intellect. The conclusive point is depiction of the Soul in terms of power [*dunamis*], for example in *Enn.* IV. 8 [6]. 2, while analysing the Soul's entry into bodies. With reference to Plato's *Timaeus*, Plotinus writes about various powers of soul, wherefrom only "ultimate power" [*dunamin eschatēn*] is sent by the Soul to the interior of the world.⁴³ The same Soul is then present in the world and also manages the world "from outside" to some extent, whereas all spatial expressions are here solely metaphors. What is "external" represents the power of providence of the World-Soul, and what is "internal" the activity of unitary souls. Therefore, parts of the Soul, or in other words individual souls are powers of the Soul, and actually the power revealing in fragmentation, considering the fact that it is regarded from the side of bodies distinguished by spatial divisibility.⁴⁴ Thus, nature *kosmos aisthētos* implies the vision of the Soul from the angle of what is both bodily and spatial. The Soul remains one, although its powers manifest themselves in many bodies, just like Intellect is one, despite the multitude of ideas present in it.⁴⁵

Returning to the quoted passage of *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 14. 16–23, the unity with the noetic reality or fusion of individuals with the substance of Intellect may be understood, in the light of the conception of monopsychism, as the substantial unity of the psychic sphere in *kosmos noetos* and also the possibility of the renewed experience of unity with Intellect, thanks to the eternal contemplation activity of Soul-hypostasis. The accession of "other man" means the decline of actual self-knowledge and replacing it with the perception of man through bodily divisions. The unity with Intellect is, however, the experience of generality and not individuality, and this thread also appears in *Enn.* V. 3 [49]. 4. 5–17 where Plotinus conceives the vision of substantial unity with *nous* exceeding the nature of soul:

⁴³ See *ibidem*, pp. 400–405.

⁴⁴ "[...] but soul is inseparable and indivisible There [in Intellect – A.W.], but it is in its nature to be divided. For its division is departing from Intellect and coming to be in a body". *Enn.* IV. 2 [21]. 1. 8–10; *ibidem*, pp. 20–21. This passage seems to be at variance with Plotinus' utterances about the unity of all souls and the statements of dissimilar nature of soul in relation to body. Plotinus adds, however, that he considers here not soul, but what is represented in body from soul, that is its certain power. Furthermore, soul "For even here it is not only divisible, but also indivisible; for that of it which is divided is indivisibly divided [*to gar merizomenon autēs ameristōs merizetai*]. For it gives itself to the whole body and is not divided in that it gives itself whole to the whole and is divided in that it is present in every part"; *Enn.* IV. 2 [21]. 1. 18–22; *ibidem*, pp. 22–23.

⁴⁵ *Enn.* VI. 4 [22]. 4. 34–46: "The soul's being one, then, does not do away with the many souls, any more than being does away with beings, nor does the multiplicity there in the true All fight with the one, nor does one need to fill up bodies with life by the multiplicity, nor ought one to think that the multitude of souls came into existence because of bodily magnitude, but souls were both many and one before the bodies [*pro tōn sōmatōn*]. For the many are already in the whole, not in potency [*hai pollai ēdē ou dunamei*], but each and every in active actuality [*all' energeia hekastē*]; for neither does the one and whole hinder the many from being in it, nor do the many hinder the one. For they stand apart without standing aloof and are present to each other without being made other than themselves; for they are not bounded off [...] by limits, as neither are the many bodies of knowledge in one soul, and the one is of such a kind as to have all of them in it [*hē mia toiautē, hōste echein en heautēi pasas*]"; Plotinus, *Ennead VI. 1–5*. pp. 288–289.

And we know ourselves by learning all other things by such a vision [sc. vision of Intellect – A.W.], either learning a vision of this kind according to the knowing power, by that very power itself, or ourselves becoming it; so that the man who knows himself is double, one knowing the nature of the reasoning which belongs to soul [*tēs dianoias tēs psuchikēs phusin*], and one up above this man, whose knows himself [*ton ginōskonta heauton*] according to Intellect because he has become that Intellect; and by that Intellect he thinks himself again, not any longer as man, but having become altogether other and snatching himself up into the higher world, drawing up only the better part of soul [*to tēs psuchēs ameinon*] which alone is able to be winged for intellection, with which someone there keeps by him what he sees.⁴⁶

It is characteristic here that the unity with Intellect, which is the fulfilment of the contemplative power of a unitary soul possessed owing to the epistrophic activity of Soul-hypostasis, means losing the awareness of humanity, which may be interpreted as the loss of awareness of one's own individual separateness. In other words, the possibility of experiencing the reality of the Soul and Intellect cannot be given alongside the awareness of one's own individuality, hence a specific ontic transformation is accomplished which consists in the real being of what is supraindividual. Therefore, unitary souls are also particles of Intellect, although they cannot experience their own partitive nature in the unity with *nous*.

Implications of the metaphor of the centre of the soul. Summary

In *Enn.* VI. 9 [9]. 8. 2–13 Plotinus writes:

[...] its [soul – A.W.] natural movement is, as it were, in a circle around something, something not outside [*ouk eksō*] but a centre, and the centre is that from which the circle derives [...]. For a god [*theos*] is what is linked to that centre, but that which stands far from it is multiple human being or a beast [*anthrōpos ho polus kai thērion*]. Is then this, as it were, centre of the soul [*tēs psuchēs oion kentron*] what we are looking for? Or should we think it is something else [*ē allo*] in which all such centres coincide [*ho panta hoion kentra sumptei*]?⁴⁷

The metaphor of concentric circles contains the key elements of the Plotinian conception of “true man”. It demonstrates that man is a single manifestation of hypostases which is vested in the real capability, that is the substantial auto identification with Being-Truth, and its source – the One. The One causes every being form to be marked with a certain type of unity, which Plotinus describes as “one” of a given thing.⁴⁸ The quest for this unity leads Plotinus to distinguish the primary strata of man's being, in fact based upon the criterion of unity, which are:

⁴⁶ Plotinus, *Ennead* V, pp. 82–83.

⁴⁷ Plotinus, *Ennead*, VI.6–9, pp. 330–331.

⁴⁸ See *Enn.* VI. 6 [34]. 5. 34–47.

- soul united with body, i.e. man in body, i.e. the soul accomplishing a causative function of Soul-hypostasis bound up with *proodos* movement,
- true man, i.e. pertaining to the neotic world, accomplishing functions of the Soul bound up with *epistrophē* movement which does not reveal features of the entity with its variable, casual and temporarily determined attributes characteristic of the incarnate condition.

This metaphor also shows the spectrum of experience as a field of the possible states of consciousness of a unitary soul, which can be both something which is lower as well something which is higher. In accordance with Bréhier's statement, Plotinian psychology is the study of various levels on which the self may dwell; those levels are stretched out between the One and the sensible world. Whereas typically human psychic attributes (like memory, emotions, sensations, comprehension) appear merely as a certain level in the life of the soul.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ See É. Bréhier: *The Philosophy...*, pp. 54–55.

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Coming to a Conclusion and *significatum propositionis* according to Gregory of Rimini*

Abstract

The paper focuses on the discussion of *significata propositionum*, the proper semantic correlates of sentences, as the alleged objects of mental act of arriving to a conclusion, as developed in Gregory of Rimini's Prologue to his commentary to the *Sentences*. After a brief account of arriving to a conclusion presented by Gregory as some kind of mental act, I present his arguments for the thesis that neither the actual thing the conclusion is about, nor the actually formulated conclusion itself as some actuality in the mind, are direct objects of that mental act (I). Then I present Gregory's account of what kind of entities are the *significata propositionum*: that no kind of actuality (neither in thought, nor in extramental reality) can be ascribed to them, and so they have to be considered as entities in some special sense (II). In (III) I show that: (1) this sense needs further elucidation; (2) it is possible to demonstrate the way this sense is connected with the actuality in mind and actuality of a thing the conclusion is about; and (3) the activity of arriving to a conclusion needs to be investigated. A possible line of investigation is demonstrated by showing why Gregory's arguments in (I) are invalid.

One comes to a conclusion when one's formulation of a new judgment is based upon what one has already known. For example, a jeweller – basing on his general knowledge of jewellery – comes to the final conclusion that as a matter of fact, a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond, or that at least one (or at most one) of some pieces of jewellery are real diamonds. In ethics we come to the conclusion that patience and perseverance are two distinct virtues, or that magnanimity is contrary to ambition, but not to humility; and basing on what we know about some skill, we come to a conclusion that something belongs to it (for example, that different shades of red belongs to the painter's skill). Now this kind of coming to a conclusion is a kind of episodic mental act which we ascribe to us or to somebody else; it is a kind of thing people manage to do in some circumstances (easily or with

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difficulty), and in some circumstances fail to do and is the kind of thing people do correctly or incorrectly. There is a huge variety of mental acts of this sort; what is peculiar to all of them, however, is that one's answer to a new question is based on what one already knows.

Now the question concerning the object (*obiectum*) of this sort of mental act – what is precisely the thing grasped immediately in this sort of activity – leads Gregory of Rimini, in the *Prologue* of his *Sentences* commentary, to admit a very peculiar kind of entities which are significates of propositions (as some syntactic wholes) – *significata propositionum*, and, in particular, of propositions formed as conclusions one comes to¹.

The Latin phrases intended to designate or name this kind of entities are composed of the infinitive form of the verb and the accusative form of the noun; in English they might be rendered by preceding a sentence by 'the state of affairs that', e.g. *Socratem sedere* – 'the state of affairs that Socrates is sitting'; or *hominem esse risibilem* – 'the state of affairs that man can laugh'². This kind of Latin phrases comes naturally together with intentional verbs in *accusativus cum infinitivo* construction reporting various mental acts. On the other hand, they are used to report the reference of propositions in sentences like '»Man can laugh« refers to the state of affairs that man is able to laugh' ('»*Homo est risibilis*« *significat hominem esse risibilem*'). Various systematic uses of such phrases are very popular in scholasticism, although it is not widely agreed what kind of entities these phrases designate or name – and, in particular, that they designate or name the special kind of entities called *significata propositionum*.

Gregory of Rimini's discussion presents one of the main standpoints in the rich and vivid late scholastic discussion on *significata propositionum* as a special kind of entity allegedly designed or named by the mentioned phrases³. Interestingly, his analysis of the significates of propositions is intrinsically connected with his analysis of coming to a conclusion as a special kind of mental act. It is the latter analysis I would like to comment on here; it is only one of many strands of the discussion about the ontology of *significata propositionum*, however, it is a very important and interesting one.

First I present Gregory's arguments for the thesis that the proper object for coming to a conclusion, the very thing one grasps and attains in this sort of

¹ Gregorius Ariminensis, *Lectura super primum Sententiarum*, *Prologus*, q.1, art.1 (*Lectura super primum et secundum Sententiarum*, vol.1: *Super primum*, W. Eckermann et al. (ed.), Berlin 1981). More precisely, Gregory investigates some peculiar kind of coming to a conclusion which is specific for knowledge (*scientia*); in the arguments I present here, however, no specific properties of this kind of reasoning are relevant, so I speak of coming to a conclusion in a quite general way.

² I use 'the state of affairs that *p*' in a loose and ontologically neutral way – that is, I do not presuppose here any stipulations of the kind of entities states of affairs are – on their identity criteria and so on.

³ For the detailed reviews of the whole scholastic discussion on this subject see e.g. Paulus Venetus, *Logica magna*, pars II, tract.11, Venetiis 1499; Jeronimo Pardo, *Medulla dyalectices*, c.1: *De veritate et falsitate propositionis* (Parisiis 1505) (the edition by P. Perez-Illzarbe is to be found at www.unav.es/pilzarbe1); for a contemporary review of the history of the discussion see e.g. G. Nuchelmans, *Late Scholastic and Humanist Theories of the Proposition* (Amsterdam 1980), pp. 45–73.

mental act, is the total significatum of the conclusion, *significatum totale conclusionis* (I); then I present Gregory's answer to the question: What kind of entities are *significata propositionum* (II)? Finally I make some points concerning the actuality of thought which Gregory's arguments make particularly clear.

I. Significates of Propositions

In the opening of his question, Gregory discusses Ockham's thesis that the immediate and proper object of the act of coming to a conclusion – the very thing grasped in this kind of cognitive activity – is the conclusion drawn and formed by us itself; the conclusion is something actually inhering in our mind and produced by our mind which *forms* it. It is, in other words, a mental proposition inhering in our mind formed by us as a conclusion from a given set of premises. Generally speaking, the relation of the conclusion itself to the act of forming it is like the relation of a word to the act of uttering it; at any rate, to study forming a conclusion as a kind of mental act, it is necessary to grasp the way in which the conclusion is produced by one who thinks (these are only general remarks, but the very discussion I am presenting here sheds some important light on the question of what, in the activity of forming a conclusion, is the thing produced by the one who forms it)⁴.

The arguments for Ockham's thesis reported by Gregory consist in showing various difficulties faced by one who thinks that the proper and immediate object of coming to a conclusion is the actually existing thing which the conclusion concerns; or by one who thinks that it is enough to point at such a thing as the object of the mental act. For example, for various reasons it is often difficult to say what exactly is the thing the conclusion concerns (when, for instance, the conclusion is general; so, for example, one might wonder whose or which patience is the object of coming to the conclusion that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues). Moreover, the immediate object of coming to a conclusion is what you assert and what you prove; and it is not enough to say, in the situations outlined above, that one asserts a diamond or patience and that they are the things proven. Moreover, when one asserts some conclusion concerning a thing, one rejects at the same time some other conclusion about the same thing (for example, that the piece of jewellery is a forgery), and it is not the same thing that we assert and reject: we reject one thing and assert another. The thing existing actually in extramental reality – what the conclusion is about, is something one grasps by coming to this conclusion, but in a way which is significantly different from the way in which one grasps the very conclusion formed; so, Ockham says, the thing the conclusion concerns is *subiectum* of the mental act, and the very formed conclusion (the mental proposition) is its *obiectum*.

I think that the general idea of the Ockham's thesis is the following: When one comes to the conclusion that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues,

⁴ In q.1 art.3 of *Prologue* Gregory settles the question whether the actual formulation (*formatio*) of a conclusion that it is really so and so, the actual assertion (*assensus*) that it is so and the actual cognition (*cognitio*) that it is so are always three distinct acts, or it is possible that all three things are done just in one and the same mental act.

it might be asked what exactly is the thing one has reached. Now according to Ockham's thesis, what one has reached then is, on one hand, the conclusion one manages to form – one reaches it in the sense that one succeeds in forming it. This sense of achievement is comparable to one in which you can reach some perfection or mastery. In other words, it is the conclusion formed that one then reaches – in the sense comparable to achieving mastery (insofar as the mastery you reach is something inherent in you that makes the difference between the one who is master and the one who is not). On the other hand, what one has reached is the very virtue of patience, insofar that he has approached it realising something about it. To say what has been reached is not enough to point at the virtue of patience the conclusion concerns, but it is necessary to identify something actually inhering in one's mind that has been reached in the sense comparable to reaching some kind of mastery.

Having presented Ockham's thesis, Gregory forms three conclusions. (i) The actual conclusion formed is not (*pace* Ockham) an immediate object of coming to the conclusion, the very thing grasped in such a mental act. (ii) The thing (existing actually in extramental reality) the conclusion concerns is not (in accordance with Ockham's thesis) an immediate object of such a mental act. (iii) The immediate object of such a mental act is the significatum of the proposition as a whole – *significatum totale propositionis*, as in the examples referred to above: the state of affairs that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond, or that at least one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond, or that only one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond, and the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues.

(i) Gregory's arguments for the first conclusion are, of course, the key issue of the whole discussion. Gregory offers two arguments against Ockham's thesis that it is the very conclusion formed in the mind (a mental proposition) that is the immediate object of the act of coming to the conclusion.

(*) First, if the formed conclusion were the thing grasped in the act of coming to the conclusion, it should be actually apprehended (*actu apprehensa*) and grasped by one who comes to it – in the very act of coming to it; but, Gregory maintains, it is not. He thinks that in forming a conclusion one does not necessarily grasp or apprehend the conclusion that one produces and that inheres then in one's mind.

Now what makes one think that in coming to a conclusion, one does not apprehend what one comes to? That, for example, when we conclude that a given piece of jewellery (or only one of the pieces of jewellery) is a real diamond, or that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues, the mental proposition we then form does not become clear for us? One might wonder also what the mental proposition is that we reach, if it is something we do *not* apprehend, something unknown to us. Gregory says that if the mental proposition we reach was actually apprehended in the very act of forming it, that it might be apprehended in two ways only, and he tries to prove that it is not apprehended in any of them.

The first way would be to apprehend something without judging it, in a *simplex intelligentia* (I think we encounter this kind of mental act in one who follows some list or enumeration, for example, an enumeration of elementary colours,

of virtues, of works or of theses of an author, or more generally, in one who enumerates something). This kind of apprehension, however, for several reasons cannot account for the way we apprehend the conclusion we reach. First of all, it is a generally dissimilar kind of actual apprehension, for by coming to a conclusion we do form a judgement. Moreover, Gregory says, this kind of apprehension of the conclusion is not based on the knowledge of premises at all; so to apprehend the conclusion in this way is not to *come* to it or to *reach* it. In other words, this kind of actual comprehension of the conclusion seems to lack what is most specific for grasping something by coming to a conclusion.

The other way, Gregory says, would be to apprehend the mental proposition forming some judgement about it in an *apprehensio iudicaria*. He adds that it would be the judgement that the proposition is true, for no other judgement concerning the formed conclusion seems to be the recognition that it is really so, as the conclusion says. Now Gregory states that it is beyond doubt that not everyone who actually draws some conclusion forms such a judgement concerning the conclusion he draws. So, for example, a mathematician who proves that the sides of a given triangle are equal does not *eo ipso* form a judgement that his mental proposition concerning the triangle is true; and the doctor who reaches the conclusion that a given illness should be treated with such and such way does not *eo ipso* form a judgement that his conclusion is true – although, Gregory affirms, both the mathematician and the doctor could easily form the relevant judgements about the truth of mental propositions. Moreover, Gregory maintains, it is not the same to ask whether the sides of a given triangle are equal, and to ask whether some actually formed mental proposition that they are equal, is true; and it is not the same to come to the conclusion that it is so in the former and in the latter case; the former is the only thing that belongs to geometry (or at least, that belongs to geometry *primarily*); one might say that geometry is about triangles and not about mental propositions about triangles. So, Gregory concludes, to form or to draw a conclusion is not to apprehend the mental proposition formed as a conclusion; by coming to a conclusion we do not *eo ipso* apprehend the conclusion we come to.

(**) Secondly, Gregory also maintains that the formed conclusion is not immediately the object of the act of coming to the conclusion for some other reason. He first formulates three premises of the argument: (a) the state of affairs that it is so and so (*sic esse*), is not the same thing as the state of affairs that the mental proposition that it is so and so is true (*propositionem enuntiantem sic esse esse veram*), although the former entails in some way the latter. Moreover, (b) the state of affairs that it is so and so (*sic esse*) is not the same thing as the mental proposition that it is so and so (*propositio enuntians sic esse*). Finally, (c) the mental proposition that it is so and so is not the same thing as the state of affairs that the mental proposition is true (*ipsam esse veram*)⁵. So when we come to the conclusion that it is so and so, what the object of our act that we come to is ex-

⁵ ‘*Propositio*’ is here used by Gregory in the sense of something formulated in the mind when we make some judgement and something actually inhering in one’s mind when one actually forms some judgement; so I render ‘*propositio*’ by ‘mental proposition’.

actly (*praecise*), is the state of affairs that it is so and so (as opposed to the mental proposition that it is so and so and to the state of affairs that the thought is true). The state of affairs that the mental proposition is true, is, Gregory maintains, the object of some other act of coming to a conclusion; this time the knowledge that it is really so and so is one of the premises for the conclusion about the truth of the proposition.

Gregory underpins the premises (a)-(c) with, for example, Aristotelian statements from the *Categories* that the state of affairs that it is so and so is a cause of the state of affairs that the proposition that it is so and so is true – and not the other way round. It is worth noticing, however, that besides such grounds the premises (a)-(c) presuppose some ideas about the identity and non-identity of the state of affairs that *p* and the state of affairs that *q* (for distinct *p* and *q* propositions); about the identity and non-identity of *significata propositionum*.

Now this question of identity is fundamental for the systematic use of the accusative plus infinitive phrases in scholasticism since it is fundamental for the question about the kind of entities these phrases are supposed to designate or name; so it is fundamental for the discussion about *significata propositionum*, if we are to treat them as the kind of entities designed by the mentioned kind of phrases. Most general traits of the identity criteria of what these phrases are supposed to designate reflect the most general properties of the kind of entity the infinitive plus accusative phrases designate and the details of their identity criteria reflect the details of the natures of these entities⁶.

Moreover, the premises (a)-(c) presuppose some ideas about when the distinction of significates of propositions entails the distinction of the mental acts in which these significates are grasped; anyway, it seems clear that not every distinction of significates is reflected in a distinction of mental acts.

These issues are fundamental in the discussion of mental acts and significates of propositions. This shows, however, that in some sense the argument (*) is more important than (**). The three premises of (**) are based on some advanced ideas about the kind of entities designated by accusative plus infinitive phrases and about the connections between this kind of entities and the mental acts in which they are grasped.

(ii) Gregory's arguments for the second conclusion (ii) consist, like Ockham's, in showing some difficulties encountered by the thesis that the immediate object of the act of coming to a conclusion is a thing existing actually in extramental reality (or difficulties we encounter when we limit ourselves to pointing at such a thing as an object of the mental act). Here Gregory adds some difficulties to the ones in the arguments for Ockham's thesis; for example, sometimes what one

⁶ So, for example, Aquinas answers some detailed questions concerning the identity of things designed by accusative plus infinitive phrases; he asks whether *Socratem sedere* and *Socratem sedisse* are one and the same thing, or two distinct things (more precisely: one and the same *enuntiabile* or two distinct *enuntiabilia*), when they concern the same sitting of Socrates) (*Quodl.* IV, q.9, art.2; *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia*, R. Busa SI (ed.) (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt 1980), vol. 3). But the general rules of answering the questions of the identity of things designed by accusative plus infinitive phrases in Aquinas are different than in Gregory of Rimini.

comes to occurs necessarily, although the thing existing actually in extramental reality which it concerns does not exist necessarily, and generally various sorts of contingent things happen to it.

(iii) For the third conclusion Gregory offers two arguments. (*) First he argues for (iii) excluding other possibilities: the immediate object of the act of coming to a conclusion is not the formed conclusion itself (as he assumes to have shown above); and it is not the very coming to it or demonstrating it, *demonstratio* (as can be shown in a similar way); and it is not a thing actually existing in extramental reality (as the arguments for (ii) have shown); and, finally, the immediate object of coming to a conclusion are not the significates of both the premises and the conclusion (for, as Gregory is going to show, they are not grasped in the same mental act). So, Gregory assumes, there remains only one possibility: that the immediate object of the act of coming to a conclusion is the significate of the conclusion as a whole (*significatum totale conclusionis*); for it is beyond doubt, he says, that one of these things is the immediate object of the act of coming to a conclusion.

(**) Secondly: the immediate object of coming to a conclusion is what we precisely assert in the conclusion (*obiectum assensus*). Now, what we assert is just the significate of the conclusion as a whole (*significatum totale conclusionis*); one who comes to a conclusion asserts precisely what the conclusion signifies (*id ipsum quod significat illa conclusio*). So, returning to the examples outlined above, what one who comes to the conclusion that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond asserts is what the proposition 'this piece of jewellery is a real diamond' signifies, and it signifies the state of affairs that the piece of jewellery is a real diamond; so he asserts the state of affairs that the piece of jewellery is a real diamond. It is precisely the very state of affairs that he asserts and what he comes to: the immediate object of the act of the coming to the conclusion and the thing immediately grasped in the mental act.

II. States of Affairs

One might, as Gregory says, make some objections against the conclusion (iii); they concern the kind of entity specific for, say, the state of affairs that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond; the kind of entity that you come to when you draw a conclusion. The first of these objections and Gregory's response deserves a special consideration.

The objection is that the significate of the proposition as a whole (*significatum totale propositionis*) either is something (*aliquid*) or is nothing (*nihil*). If it is nothing, the mental act lacks an object; and if it is something, it is something either inhering in one's mind or soul (*ens in anima*), or something existing actually in extramental reality (*ens extra animam*). Now the former possibility was rejected in Gregory's arguments for the conclusion (ii), and the latter – in Gregory's arguments for (i). So, the objection goes, it does not seem that the significate of the proposition as a whole and the object of the act of coming to a conclusion might really be something.

To grasp the sense of this objection let us make first two points. First, one who realises that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond realises something distinct from one who realises that only one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond; what the former realises is not what is realised by the latter. And one who is glad that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond is glad with the same thing the former realises. Moreover, one who is glad that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond is glad with something other than one who is glad that only one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond, and with something other than one who is glad that at least one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond. Now in such comparisons of these acts from the point of view of (non-)identity of their objects we appeal to some stipulations concerning (non-)identity of the objects, and such comparisons are clearly justified and of great importance; so these stipulations are important, too. And the objects of these acts are in an important sense *something*, things with identity criteria which one can come to or be glad with.

Secondly, as far as a thing which is *something* in an important sense is concerned, we can significantly ask how it is related to what *actually exists*, and whether actuality can be ascribed to it. In other words: we can trace the way in which the identity criteria of the thing are connected with actuality or being actual. Two kinds of actuality should be distinguished here: on one hand, the kind of actuality specific for thought and mind (we investigate this sort of actuality when we study various kinds of thought as some acts or forms of activity); on the other hand, the kind of actuality specific for things existing actually in extramental reality. Moreover, the same sort of actuality might be ascribed to something in various ways.

Let us consider briefly one case of ascribing actuality which is much discussed in scholasticism; it concerns the significates of names or predicates (as opposed to significates of propositions). There are various kinds of actuality which we ascribe to redness or being red: one kind of actuality in the red apple; another kind of actuality on the white wall with the red patch of light thrown onto the wall by the red piece of glass in the window; still another kind of actuality in the memory of a man in which some shade of red became embedded; still another – in the imagination of a man who pictures some shade of red; still another – in the sight of a man who is actually seeing something red; still another – in the power of reason of a man who browses a set of dyes thinking of red (and *maybe* still another in the mirror in which you can see something red). We might add that being red is an actuality of the surface of the apple *in another way* than it is an actuality of the surface of the white wall on which it appears, an *in still another way* – the actuality of the power of reason⁷. These various kinds of actuality have specific ways of coming to be, of continuing to exist and of passing away; specific kinds of

⁷ For discussions of various kinds of actuality ascribed e.g. to redness see for example: P.T. Geach, *Aquinas*, [in:] G.E.M. Anscombe, P.T. Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford 1961), pp. 94–96). S. Thomas, *In De anima Aristotelis*, lib.3, lectio 2, n.6 (*S. Thomae Opera*, vol. 3); for the discussion of redness on a white wall see e.g. Joannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio*, lib. II, dist.13 and Francis Lychetus commentary *ad locum* (*Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia* (Lugduni 1631; reprint: Hildesheim 1968)).

real changes which their coming to be and passing away constitute; specific kinds of unity, identity and distinction; so they are deeply different sorts of actuality we ascribe to redness, either in the minds or in extramental reality. It opens doors to immensely important systematic considerations on the identification of particular actualities; to begin with a relatively simple issue: we would like to maintain that in a uniformly coloured red apple the actuality of its being red is one and the same actuality as the actuality of its being coloured, but at the same time is an actuality distinct from the actuality of its scent, and that the actuality of the apple's being red continues to exist when the apple remains in the darkness. So the question of what kind of entity redness is, is also the question about the various kinds of actuality which might be correctly ascribed to redness, together with the specific kinds of continuing to exist, unity and identity. (Generally speaking, they are all kinds of actuality in time as opposed to eternal and changeless actuality which is the life of God.)

Now the way in which Gregory replies to the objection sketched above is the following. He begins with a remark that 'something' (*aliquid*) happens to be used in various ways and there are various senses of being something; they are paralleled by the various senses of being a thing (*res*) or a being (*ens*). Then he distinguishes at three deeply different ways in which something might be said to be something (*aliquid*) or a thing (*res*).

(i) In the first and most general sense, being something can be ascribed to anything which can be signified (is *significabile*) in any way, and in particular signified by a proposition either true or false. So in this sense, the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues is something and a thing; but the state of affairs that to be red is to be blue is something and a thing too, inasmuch it is something signified by the (false) proposition that to be red is to be blue.

(ii) In the second sense being something and being a thing can be ascribed to everything that can be signified by a true utterance, and especially by a true proposition; but it cannot be ascribed to what is signified by a false proposition. So in this sense the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues is something and a thing – inasmuch it is something signified by a true proposition that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues; but the state of affairs that to be red is to be blue is not something or a thing in this sense.

(iii) In the third sense being something and being a thing can be ascribed to something which is an actually existing entity (*existens entitas*), like a given redness or a given man. Both the things in extramental reality and the thoughts concerning them are things in this sense⁸.

⁸ The sense (ii), connected with the concept of a true proposition, might be associated with Frege's theses on existence in §53 of *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* and Quine's theses in *On What There Is*. The sense (iii) is closely related to the notion of actuality and actual existence, especially as they are used in Aristotelian *dictum*: *vivere viventibus est esse*, "for a living thing to live is to exist". So the distinction of the senses (ii) and (iii) is closely related to the distinction between the two clearly different notions of existence. For discussions of this distinction see especially P.T. Geach, 'Form and Existence', *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, 55 (1954–1955), pp. 251–272 and *What Actually Exists*, [in:] P.T. Geach, *God and the Soul* (London

So, Gregory continues, if we take being something in the first or in the second sense, the significate of the proposition formed as a conclusion, is something and a thing (in the second sense, of course, inasmuch as the conclusion is true). But if we take being something in the third sense, the significate of the proposition formed as a conclusion is not something and is not a thing at all, independent of the truth or falsity of the conclusion. It is not any actually existing entity, and, as Gregory seems to maintain, no kind of actuality can be ascribed to it at all: neither a kind of actuality specific for things in extramental reality, nor a kind of actuality specific for thoughts concerning them. When we ascribe occurrence or truth to states of affairs we do *not* ascribe actuality to them. In this sense, Gregory says that the state of affairs that man is able to laugh (*hominem esse risibilem*) is not something, but is the state of affairs that man can laugh (*hominem posse ridere*). So, we may add, it is neither such a kind of actually existing entity, like someone's ability to laugh, nor such a kind of actually existing entity – like someone's thought that it is really so that man is able to laugh.

We might also add that the state of affairs that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond – what precisely (according to Gregory) the jeweller comes to – is not any actually existing entity, and in particular: it is neither an entity to be identified with the entity of the diamond nor an entity distinct from the entity of the diamond. And something similar might be said of the state of affairs that at least one (or that only one) of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond.

So, Gregory seems to maintain, neither an actuality specific for something inhering in mind, nor an actuality specific for something existing actually in extramental reality can be ascribed to the state of affairs that man is able to laugh or to the state of affairs that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond. And neither an actuality specific for someone's patience, nor an actuality specific for someone's thought concerning patience can be ascribed to the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues⁹.

Further arguments of Gregory show that the differences concerning actuality between (iii) on one hand and (i) and (ii) on the other are also connected with the fundamental difference concerning the way in which a kind of necessity (*necessitas*), unchangeability or inevitability can be ascribed on one hand to something which is a being in the senses (i) or (ii) only, and on the other hand to something which is a being in the (iii) sense. For example, it seems clear that someone's patience (which is some entity actually inhering in him) is unshakeable or reliable in a fundamentally different way than the very state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues (which is not a being in the (iii) sense) is unchangeable¹⁰.

1969), pp.65–74; *Three Philosophers*, pp. 88–101.

⁹ Pardo, *Medulla*, c. I, *prima conclusio pro primo modo*: “[According to Gregory] the significate of proposition as such is not something existing actually [*non est aliquid existens*]; so the proposition ‘man is an animal’ signifies that man is an animal, and that man is an animal is not something existing actually [*hominem esse animal non est aliquid existens*]”.

¹⁰ There are also further fundamental differences. Pardo remarks for example, that if a significate of a proposition is not something actually in existence, it cannot be an object that is the cause of knowledge about itself (*causat notitiam sui*), but being such cause seems to be

It seems that Gregory's answer to the objection might be stated in three theses. (a) There is an important sense of being something and being a thing in which what we precisely come to when we come to some conclusion *is* something and a thing. Thanks to the accusative plus infinitive phrases we may refer to what is a thing just in this sense. (b) That sense of being something or being a thing is radically different from the sense in which an actually existing entity is something and a thing. (c) This fundamental difference of senses consist in the fact that we do not ascribe neither an actuality in the mind nor actuality in the extramental reality to that which is a thing in sense (i) or (ii) only.

III. Coming to a Conclusion

I think that Gregory's arguments show quite clearly that there is an important sense of being something or being a thing which has something to do with that what one precisely comes to when one comes to a conclusion, and with this kind of mental acts in general. They show also that this sense is quite different from the sense in which being something or a thing is ascribed to actually existing entities like the redness of a given apple, the redness on a given white wall or the redness in somebody's mind.

It seems, however, equally clear that both an answer to the objection outlined above and the answer to the question about the object of the act of coming to a conclusion remain incomplete until something more is said about the connections between the three senses of being a thing. It is not enough to say, for example, that the state of affairs – that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues, is something and a thing in a completely different sense than the sense in which someone's patience or someone's thought on patience is something or a thing; and it is not enough to point at this distinction in order to say whether at all (an if so, in what way) actuality in extramental reality or in some mind might be ascribed to the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues. The distinction is enlightening inasmuch as it is a kind of announcement of a more detailed presentation of the interconnections between these senses of being something or being a thing which are clearly different (it seems to me that it is usually so whenever we are to distinguish senses or ways of ascribing something in philosophy).

To present these interconnections between different senses of being something or being a thing, one has to show more precisely the way in which something which is a thing in the senses (i) or (ii) only is linked with the actuality of something which is a thing in the (iii) sense. On one hand, these links are fundamental for the distinction between the senses (i) and (ii) – between the significates of true and false propositions (the distinction between senses (i) and (ii) is based on the difference of links with the actualities the propositions concern); on the other hand, they are fundamental for the distinction between (i) or (ii) and (iii). In the former case one should ask about the connection between the truth of a proposition and the

something specific for the object of knowledge in general (*Medulla*, c.1, *tertia instantia contra primam conclusionem*). Anyway, it is an important question how knowledge having *significatum conclusionis* as its object, is caused by some actually existing entities.

actualities making it true; in the latter case – about the connection between the identity and distinction of significates of propositions and the identity and distinction of actualities the propositions concern; the connection between identification of objects which are not actual and identification of actualities.

For example: one should investigate the connection between the state of affairs that at least one (or that only one) of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond and the actuality of a diamond that makes the proposition true; and the connection between the state of affairs that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues and the actuality of someone's patience and someone's perseverance. To grasp these connections, one has to investigate the connection between the state of affairs that at least one (or that only one) of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond and the mental act in which one comes to realise that (the actuality of the mental proposition that it is really so). The identification of actualities of various sorts, both in minds and in extramental reality, proves to be fundamental for these investigations.

We can grasp the connection between the state of affairs (that at least one (or that only one) of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond) and the actuality of something that is a thing in the (iii) sense when we investigate the relationship between the actuality of the mental proposition formed as a conclusion and the actuality of the diamond. In other words: to answer the question what is precisely the thing a jeweller comes to (when he concludes that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond, or that at least one (or only one) of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond) – one has to trace the relationship between the mental proposition formed actually by one who comes to these things and the actuality of the diamond the conclusion concerns. The differences between the three things (in the (i) or (ii) sense) he may come to are reflected in the different relationships of his actually formed mental proposition and the actuality of the diamond in the three cases (in particular: they are syntactical differences, and the syntax is something specific for this peculiar way of producing something in which man produces his thoughts).

To refuse to consider these questions and to content oneself with the statement that a state of affairs (that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues) is something or a thing in a sense which is *completely different* from the sense in which someone's actually existing patience or a mental proposition concerning patience inhering in someone's mind is something and a thing, leads one to admit some peculiar *sui generis* kind of entity, *things* in some quite special sense. One then assures that things of this kind are completely different both from actually formed thoughts and from actualities in extramental reality, but what makes one think so is, at least to some extent, the very refusal to investigate their connections with the kinds of entities which we are more familiar with. Eventually, both the very nature of this alleged peculiar kind of things and, more importantly, the nature of the mental act of coming to a conclusion remain unclear and inaccessible for us, as Gregory's arguments show beyond doubt that to be clear about the nature of a mental act, one has to be clear about its very object¹¹.

¹¹ P.T. Geach says that an analysis of the acts of judgement according to which the object of such an act is a complex object or the objective the proposition signifies is a manifestation of

So the question about the connections between the three senses of being something and being a thing, leads to the investigation of this kind of actuality or activity which is coming to a conclusion, and the actuality of the mental proposition formed as a conclusion. One should return to the discussion of Gregory and Ockham, as outlined above, on the issue of the actually formed conclusion and the way it is grasped or apprehended in the very act of forming it, and to the sense of reaching the conclusion in which the conclusion one reaches is something inhering in him, and in this respect, is like the perfection or mastery one has reached.

Three things seem specific for the mental proposition actually formed as a conclusion. (a) As something formulated by one who reaches the conclusion is something produced by him in a specific way; (b) the formulation of the mental proposition is deeply connected with its syntax (and because of that there are various conclusions concerning the same, differing in syntactical aspects); (c) the mental proposition actually formed as a conclusion is comparable to light or clarity in which the thing it concerns (the diamond or patience) becomes clear; it is the clarity one gains when one reaches the conclusion.

Pace Gregory's arguments against Ockham it seems clear that the mental proposition actually formed as a conclusion is something apprehended or grasped by one who reaches it – something that becomes clear for him precisely inasmuch it is reached by him. Drawing a conclusion that a given piece of jewellery is a real diamond or that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues is a kind of activity whose performance is based on the knowledge of diamonds and virtues one already has. But if some activity is based on knowledge in this way, it is known to one who performs it precisely because its performance is based on his knowledge. The fundamental question is, of course, what kind of activity based on some knowledge is to draw a conclusion, and what precisely is the role of the knowledge in the performance of this kind of activity. Adequate answers to these questions would clarify the way in which the conclusion becomes clear for the one who draws it (it seems that the conclusion becomes clear in the way specific for something which is clarity or light itself).

Gregory is right in maintaining that the actual apprehension of the conclusion one has when one arrives at the conclusion is not a *simplex intelligentia* (one might have this kind of knowledge of a conclusion when one enumerates the conclusions drawn by a jeweller or by a philosopher); and that it is not the kind of knowledge of the conclusion we have when, knowing that a given piece of jewellery is a diamond, we come to the conclusion that some conclusion that it is really so (formed on some occasion by us or by someone else) was true. This shows only, however, that the two kinds of actual apprehension Gregory is ready to consider are not enough to grasp the way in which a conclusion is known to us just because we actually reach it. Anyway, it is important that in both cases indicated above we do not actually *reach* the conclusion; we could reach it and then it would become clear and known

a sort of laziness: "Anyhow, analysing judgements in terms of »objectives« is a lazy analysis; when judgement is treated as a simple two-termed relation, the complexity of the judgement is just transferred in its entirety to that which is judged, the »objective«" (P.T. Geach, *Mental Acts. Their Contents and Their Objects* (London 1956), p. 49).

to us just because we have reached it – for example, when someone tells us how to recognise a real diamond or to reach the conclusion that at least one of the pieces of jewellery is a real diamond; or how to reach the conclusion that patience and perseverance are distinct virtues.

Epistemology
and
Philosophy of Science

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What is ‘Naive Realism’?*

Abstract

Naive realism is the subject of criticisms and attacks from more sophisticated philosophical positions. Many philosophers admit that naive realism is kind of common sense knowledge. In this paper the author suggests that this approach is incorrect one. In first part of article he gives an account of a typical view of naive realism; in second part, he attempts to answer the question as to why naive realism is naive; in third part he demonstrates that there is no equivalence between naive realism and the common sense knowledge; in the fourth part he analyses some examples of the philosophical argumentation which focuses on the concept of naive realism.

The so called ‘naive realism’ is often the subject of criticism and it is a negative point of reference for epistemological positions which are regarded as more sophisticated, such as representationalism, or various non – realist positions, i.e. as instrumentalism, idealism, etc. The problem is that the recipient of this criticism is exceptionally enigmatic because nobody has officially called himself a naive realist. There is also a lack of philosophical works devoted to the systematic defence of realistic naivety. Obviously the criticised views can be proclaimed under a different term. However, if we consider – as it is commonly done – the statement that objects are exactly as we see them as typical, and a negatively evaluated expression of naivety, it will turn out that in principle nobody holds such a view. Therefore, a question is: what are the objections formulated about naive realism against? Some people associate naive realism with everyday thinking. However, a closer analysis of everyday thinking – that it is usually an unconscious natural attitude or some kind of a background that an ordinary man has towards the world – shows that it is not in any way “naive” in the sense discussed here. Moreover, if everyday thinking was based on the assumptions of naive realism, the subject using it would not be able to function properly. The question then arises: what actually refers to the term ‘naive realism?’ We can make a hypothesis that naive

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realism is a theoretical construct used in philosophical reasoning to persuasively strengthen arguments for the defended epistemological position through suggesting that it has more of a sublime and sophisticated character than what the general public, or (automatically qualified as) less discerning authors think on the subject. However, since neither the general public nor any serious authors think in these terms, we cannot only reflect on the meaning of the polemics with naive realism, but also on the well-established theoretical value of such polemics and criticism of the positions.

The objective of this paper is to examine this issue. In the first part of the article, I present the characteristics of naive realism that are based on its most common features that can be found in the philosophy of the last century; in the second part I will answer the question: where is the naivety of naive realism? The third part relates to the identification of naive realism with common sense as a typical cognitive attitude of 'an ordinary man' I will quote some arguments in favour of this view, taking into account the previous characteristics of naive realism, that such identification is wrong. In the fourth part of the article, I will examine the use of the concept of naive realism in philosophical argumentation, showing that from the perspective of earlier findings, some commonly used solutions turn out to be more or less doubtful.

1. The features of naive realism

The term 'naive realism' can be found in every major encyclopedia of philosophy. It is also referred to by authors of classic and popular introductions to the theory of epistemology. As an important philosophical problem, naive realism was particularly thought about at the end of the first half of the twentieth century in the context of the famous book *Perception* (1933) written by H. Price in which the author attempted to reconstruct naive realism and to present a modified and philosophically sophisticated version. On the other hand, B. Russell's thesis from his work, *An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth* (1940), was often quoted. According to Russell naive realism leads to physics and physics demonstrates the fallacy of naive realism.¹ Both issues evoked many comments and polemics, leading to, in some cases, the creative development of the problem of naive realism. It can be found especially in the works of A. Ayers which referred to Price and Russell: *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (London 1940) and *The Problem of Knowledge* (1956). In this reconstruction, I focus primarily on these works, referring also to some characteristics that have provoked comments about naive realism formulated more or less in the same period and presented by D. Drake (published in various works including *Essays in Critical Realism*, 1920), C.D. Broad (*The Mind*

¹ H. Price, *Perception* (New York 1933), chapters II, III; B. Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (London 1980), especially p. 15; B. Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (New York 1960), p. 183. Cf. D. Cory, 'The Transition from Naive to Critical Realism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 10 (1942), p. 261–268; J.W. Blyth, 'A Discussion of Mr. Price's *Perception*', *Mind*, 173 (1935), pp. 58–67; H.D. Lewis, 'Naive Realism and a Passage in the Theaetetus', *Mind*, 187 (1938), pp. 351–356; H.J. McLendon, 'Has Russell Proved Naive Realism Self-Contradictory?', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 9 (1956), pp. 289–302; A.P. Ushenko, 'A Note on Russell and Naive Realism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 25 (1956), pp. 819–820.

and Its Place In Nature, 1925) and later, but with more original argumentation by W. Sellars in *Science, Perception and Reality* (1963) We can get an impression that, especially in the dominant mainstream Anglo-Saxon philosophy, the scope of defining what is meant by the concept of naive realism and where is its naivety, was established more or less in that period. Subsequent authors, whose opinions are also quoted in this paper, devote less attention to this problem and refrain from going into details. Rather, they copy earlier characteristics as the effective ones. The only significant difference lies in the fact that nowadays the use of once popular language on the theory of sensory data, by means of which Price and Ayer described naive realism, is being avoided. Some interesting comments can be found in the works of H. Putman, P. Strawson and J. Searle. However, especially in the latter two, the recognition of naive realism differs from the standard one, which results in losing a significant aspect of its naivety.

It should be noted that naive realism has always been characterised as a negative point of reference within the confines of the defence of particular epistemological positions such as critical realism, fenomenalism, scientific realism, etc. There has never been a philosopher, to the best of my knowledge, who would directly defend naive realism in the way depicted later in this work, even though some scholars, such as Sellars and Ayer, presented naive realism in a form which might be accepted. This acceptance was associated with the loss of its naivety, regarded as a primary flaw, and as a result of which we would deal with a situation where naive realism could be accepted as long as it is no longer naive. Also, contemporary attempts of a partial restoration of naive realism (which can be found for example in the works of Searle) do not imply bringing back its standard or dictionary form, but rather stem from a certain conceptual confusion. The situation that led to this can be presented in the following way: first, a rather bizarre position was called naive realism; then this definition was incorrectly identified, on the one hand, with common sense, and on the other, with direct realism as such. Then it was realised that neither common sense operates in such a way nor does direct realism involve such risky assumptions, and since it was acceptable to use the terms 'naive realism', 'common sense' and 'direct realism' interchangeably, it was acknowledged that reconstructing some aspects of one of the latter two views must also imply the restoration of naive realism as such. However, the position that is being attempted to be restored, has nothing to do with the standard version, which, as mentioned above, no one seems to have defended.

Bearing in mind these introductory comments, let us try to characterise the standard or classical form of naive realism. In this form, it is an epistemological position concerning mainly the theory of perception, although it entails (usually not clearly distinguishable) ontological conclusions regarding the existence of perceived objects.² Summing up the various features of naive realism indicated by the above mentioned authors, we may be tempted to construct a general description. Naive realism, therefore, would include the following propositions:

² Cf. M. Bradie, 'Ayer and Russell on Naive Realism', *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 1 (1976), p. 176. In addition to the naive realism in literature there are also many other 'naive' theories: a naive mentalism, a naive mechanicalism, a naive physicalism etc.

(1) *Immediate perception of objects.* This feature appears in most descriptions of naive realism Broad writes about the naivety of this idea, according to which 'we are in a direct contact with parts of the surfaces of outer objects'.³ Armstrong describes naive realism as contrary to the representational "doctrine which holds that we perceive physical objects",⁴ whereas Ayer negatively describes it as a thesis which holds that "the perception of the physical objects cannot be analysed in terms of the presentation of sense-qualia".⁵ It could be concluded that naive realism assumes direct realism, or, taking into consideration the fact that the latter may have different formulations and consist of a whole set of views, it accepts the thesis of the direct character of perception, according to which the objects of our perception are external objects which exist independent of us, and not contingent upon our impressions, ideas, etc.⁶ But the problem lies in the fact that some authors consider naive realism to be some kind of phenomenalism. Admittedly, Dancy, allowing such a definition, also states that this position would have a "grotesque" character⁷ but, for example, Sellars characterizes naive realism as the simplest form of phenomenalism in which the term 'see' would be used as necessarily associated with the term 'exist' (which agrees with Ayer's characteristics; besides Sellars refers here to the same prop which is the dagger of Macbeth).⁸ At the same time, however, Sellars suggests that the term 'naive realism' should be considered as synonymous with the term 'direct realism' This introduces some confusion because the term is not used traditionally by Sellars, as a description of the cognitive relationship of two elements that is devoid of intermediary mental representation, but applying it to the 'direct' inference of knowledge from perceptual acts, which concerns the ontic status of their objects. However, if naive realism was a form of phenomenalism, it would be rather unconscious, identifying the appearance of things with themselves. This possibility of a dual interpretation is probably due to the fact that in the standard understanding discussed here, cognitive immediacy is not a necessary condition for naivety.

³ C.D. Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* (London 1925), p. 47. A good overview of Broad's representational realism is presented by J. Wild in paper 'An Examination of Critical Realism with Special Reference to Mr. C.D. Broad's Theory of Sensa', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2 (1953), pp. 143–162.

⁴ D.M. Armstrong, *Perception and the Physical World* (New York 1961), pp. 23–24.

⁵ A.J. Ayer, *Russell and Moore: The Analytic Heritage* (Cambridge 1972), p. 126. Cf. A.J. Ayer, *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (New York 1969), p. 48.

⁶ J.W. Cornman tries to present a technical definition of immediacy in the context of naive realism, starting with the following characteristics of direct experience and using an elusive in the Polish language difference between the terms *immediately* and *directly*: "s immediately experiences (object, property) p, at time t = df. At t, s directly experiences p and does so in such a way that this relationship of experiencing between s and p is simple (that is, does not consist in any other relationships or properties) and unanalyzable". J.W. Cornman, *Perception, Common Sense, and Science* (New Haven–London 1975), p. 221. According to some, for example Armstrong, naive realism is identical with direct realism (*Perception and the Physical World*, p. 23), others distinguish these positions from each other.

⁷ Cf. J. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (London 1985), p. 155 (for this reason 'naive scientific realism' would be impossible).

⁸ W. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (Atascadero 1991), p. 61.

(2) *Perceptual qualities reside in objects.* It can be seen that such characteristics are only possible if it accepts some form of representationalism which says that the identification of what is epistemologically private, or subjective, with what is ontologically public, and objective, is naive. Naive realism here would consist of regarding the matter of sense as a part of the surface of physical objects. As Drake writes, according to this view “perceptual data are in reality fragments of external beings, parts or surfaces of physical objects”.⁹ A similar view can be found in Price’s work who notes that, as for the question of the relationship between a sensual and material object, especially in the context of examining it as a “belonging to” relation, naive realism replies, holding that “in the case of a visual or tactual sense-datum, belonging to means the same as *being a part of the surface of*: in that literal sense in which the surface of one side of this page is part of the whole surface of this page”.¹⁰ The same characteristics, also arising from the positive opinion of representationalism, can be found in Broad’s works who identifies naive realism with a view that sense data, which are the manifestations of physical objects “are literally spatio-temporal parts of that object”.¹¹

(3) *Perceived objects exist independently of the perceptual subject.* This assumption can be understood in this twofold way: firstly, the objects do not cease to exist when they are not the object of perception and, secondly, they exist exactly in the same form in which they are perceived. What is important here is the idea that the mind and body of the perceiver are unnecessary or irrelevant for the existence of the object as well as for the occurrence of the sensuous quality of the external object. A naive realist identifies private sense data with the space-time parts of objects, believing at the same time that these “spatio-temporal parts of it which are not manifested in sensation are of precisely the same nature as those which are so manifested”.¹² He believes that (as a direct naive realist) “unperceived objects are able to retain properties of all the types we perceive them as having”.¹³ Also Russell states that each person who is philosophically and scientifically naive, believes that when you perceive something, it is still there when we do not look at it.¹⁴ From this assumption we can conclude that a naive realist is somebody who has not experienced a Copernican revolution in epistemology and does not see the impact that the subject of cognition has on, not only some features of the object, but also on its formation.¹⁵

(4) *Objects are perceived exactly as they are.* In such a form this assumption has an epistemological character, whereas in an ontological form it is associated with the latter and reads as follows: objects are always the way they are perceived.

⁹ D. Drake, *The Approach to Critical Realism*, [in:] D. Drake, *Essays In Critical Realism* (New York 1920), p. 8.

¹⁰ H. Price, *Perception*, p. 26.

¹¹ C.D. Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature*, p. 422.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 422.

¹³ J. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, p. 147.

¹⁴ B. Russell, *An Inquiry Into the Meaning and Truth*, p. 283.

¹⁵ Cf. H.A. Pritchard, *A characteristics of naive realism*, [in:] *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford 1909), and a polemic with D.L. Murrayem: H.A. Prichard, ‘Philosophic Pre-Copernicanism? An Answer’, *Mind*, 19 (1910), pp. 541–543.

However, it is its epistemological form that is decisive. This could be the shortest and the most adequate of the characteristics of naive realism presented here in its standard version: "objects are exactly the way we perceive them" (Russell),¹⁶ "external objects [...] are always the way they appear" (Kotarbiński),¹⁷ "the world is the way it presents itself" (Woleński).¹⁸ It seems that this feature – that is the conviction that our perception accurately copies transcendental entities existing independently of us – can be regarded as vital for the characteristics of naive realism. From this perspective it is understandable that naive realism could be formulated in a phenomenalist version (representational). The problem is not whether we perceive the world directly or not, but about whether we see it exactly as it is.

Apart from the above features, which due to their prevalence can be considered essential to define naive realism, I would also like to draw attention to two less important features that clarify the previous characterisation.

(5) *Perception is knowledge*. Price draws attention to this assumption. When answering the questions, what is perceptual consciousness and how is it connected to sensory cognition, naive realism states that awareness of the object is strictly speaking "*knowing that* there exist an object to which the sense-datum now sensed by my belongs".¹⁹ This knowledge does not depend on inferring from the existence impression about the existence of the object as the cause of these impressions (as in the causal theory of perception), but it has a pre – discursive character (it is a type of *tacit knowledge*). Sellars refers to such a solution, seeing the confusion in naive realism of two meanings of the term 'direct experience' – non-epistemic with epistemic, that is suggesting that the impression of something is the knowledge of the thing (here we have the case of identifying *sensation* with *inspection*). "According to 'naive' realism, seeing that a leaf is green is a special case of knowing that a leaf is green. Indeed, it is a special case of direct, i.e. non-inferential, knowing. One can infer from the fact that the leaf looks black when one is viewing it in a red light that the leaf is green. To do so, however, is not to see that the leaf is green. Nor does seeing that the leaf is green consist in inferring that it is green from the fact, say, that it looks green and one knows oneself to be viewing it in daylight. This is not to say that such an inference cannot occur, but simply that it is not an analysis of seeing that the leaf is green".²⁰

(6) *The subject is in a privileged, absolute relation to the world* This view is attributed to traditional realism by Putman who seems to identify it with metaphysical realism (at least some of its claims), which he criticised, accepting at the same time a type of 'natural realism'.²¹ Referring to Austin's criticism of sense data theory, Putnam attempts to defend a different understanding of 'naivety'

¹⁶ B. Russell, *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, p. 15.

¹⁷ T. Kotarbiński, *Elements of the Theory of Knowledge*, p. 80.

¹⁸ J. Woleński, *Epistemology*, p. 17.

¹⁹ H. Price, *Perception*, p. 26.

²⁰ W. Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, p. 61.

²¹ Cf. H. Putnam, *The Threefold cord. Mind, body, and world* (New York 1999), Lecture II: "The Importance of Being Austin: the Need for a »Second Naiveté«", pp. 21–41.

which however boils down to refining naive realism from all the features that constitute the unique nature of this position.

Undoubtedly, we could add some more features to this list but I think that either they could be reduced to those already mentioned above, or they would not be essential for the characterization of the standard version of naive realism, or they would refer to some specific understanding of this position. Therefore I suggest to end this general description.

2. Why is naive realism naive?

Another point refers to the naivety of naive realism. What causes one form of realism to be described using this term? In other words: what is the essential naivety of this realism?

There are numerous ways to reply to this question. The most general one relies on identifying naive realism with an unreflective attitude of the 'common man' and finding naivety in this unreflectiveness. Following this line of reasoning, Robert Audi, as Russell and Price did before him, observes naivety in ignorance of philosophical reflection concerning the nature of perception, regarding this naivety as synonymous to a pre – philosophical and pre – scientific supposition (a good indication of that would be, for example, ignoring philosophical arguments regarding perceptual illusion).²² Besides, such an understanding of the term 'naive' can be found when applying it to views other than realism. That which is naive is considered to be identical with that which is common, unreflective, stereotypical and colloquial. This kind of approach lies in the basis of the recognition of naive realism as an expression of common-sense views on the nature of knowledge, which I discuss later on.

Naivety can also be characterised on a more detailed level. It can be seen then in the proclamation of some philosophical views (epistemological, but also ontological). In this sense, naivety is connected with one of the features of naive realism mentioned above. We can presume that it relies on recognising the fact that an adequate description of the perceptual processes can be made by referring to mechanisms of reflection or reflectivity (therefore the naive theory of reflection is often discussed, not in the sense that its 'non- naive' version could exist, but recognising it as naive as such).²³ Naivety can also be found in a more general feature – the recognition of a non propositionality of perception,²⁴ the recognition of sensory data as part of an object or, as Sellars does in making no distinction between the epistemic and non epistemic character of sensations.

It seems, however, that naivety does not depend on the proclamation of some theory of cognition but rather on the fact that this view has the character of

²² Cf. R. Audi, *Epistemology. A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York–London 2003), p. 30; B. Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 81; H. Price, *Perception*, p. 26.

²³ Cf. T. Kotarbiński, *Elements of the Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 80–81.

²⁴ Cf. H. Putnam, *The Collapse of Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge–London 2002), p. 102; the similar statements see P.F. Strawson, *Causation in Perception*, [in:] *Freedom and Resentment*, p. 87.

some mere generalisation and it only sets the dividing line between a naive and a sophisticated view. Dancy writes, for example, that the naivety of naive realism lies in the fact that, assuming that unperceived objects can retain all types of properties that we perceive as belonging to them, this realism insists on the word "all".²⁵ We can conclude that the essential naivety of naive realism lies in the fact that it claims that *objects are always exactly the way we perceive them*.

3. Naive realism and common sense

In philosophical literature, there is a tendency to identify naive realism in the above characterised standard version with knowledge or common sense thinking. Ayer simply states that "as for naïve realism, its strength is in remaining veridical to common sense".²⁶ Common sense is usually understood as a more or less coherent set of views, usually unconscious, characterising the so called ordinary man, which are manifested in his behaviour, basic statements and methods of reasoning. Since there is no room for a detailed analysis of a common sense, it is enough to assume that common sense is understood as a pre-reflexive system of ontological and epistemological assumptions (and sometimes also axiological), proclaiming, for example, that there are material entities in space and time, there are intelligent beings, there are also some causal relationships between what is mental (thinking), and what is material, etc.

However, we may emphasise here that this identification of naive realism in the form described here with what is actually meant by the common sense approach of the so-called ordinary man, is faulty. The problem is not only that, at the ordinary level, the process of cognition proceeds in a different way than is assumed by naive realism because it is not a point of argument, but also that the point is that the pre-philosophic, and in some sense natural general epistemology, that is, a common sense notion of cognition, does not coincide with its naive-realistic concept. So an ordinary man is neither naive in his perception nor does he have a naive idea about it. Besides, some researchers of common sense do not describe it with the term 'naive' or ascribe to it previously mentioned features, especially the belief that objects are always exactly as we perceive them. We cannot infer any features which would characterise a standard version of naive realism from the traditional description of common sense (made for example by Reid and Moore), nor the latter result in typical properties of a common sense knowledge. Both positions proclaim something rather different, and in many cases their views are contradictory. Since there is no room for a detailed proof that the so-called attitude of an ordinary man cannot be described using the characteristics assigned to naive realism (or at least not by the essential characteristics; and as for the other two, they could

²⁵ J. Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, p. 147.

²⁶ J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, trans. E. König-Chwedeńczuk (Warszawa 1965), p. 102 (Ayer writes that naive realism is an "intuitive" approach", p. 99); cf. also J.W. Cornman, *Perception, Common Sense, and Science*, pp. 217–218. It is worth noting that some authors formulate objections to the validity of such identification. Cf. e.g. H. Price, *Perception*, p. 26.

be usually applied only conditionally).²⁷ I shall confine myself here to indicate on which theoretical levels we could attempt to demonstrate it.

(1) *Empirically*. The easiest way would be to show that in common knowledge, people do not accept the cognitive assumptions attributed to naive realism, is by exploring how this cognition functions in practice. Practice shows that at least the basic premise, which also attests to the naivety of naive realism, is not accepted here, that is, the claim that we know things exactly as they are (or in the ontological form that things are always as we know them). Such an assumption could at best characterise the early stages of human ontogeny, where clear distinction between subject and object, or words (symbols) and objects, has not been made yet. Perhaps some features of naive realism could be linked to children's self-centredness as described by Piaget, which characterises pre-operative thinking and ceases to dominate around the age of 7 (though already weakened from the age of 2).²⁸ However, we must add that later studies, even if they confirmed the validity of Piaget's theory, weakened it and pointed to fact that this stage lasts shorter than previously thought. Many researchers have also suggested that with the acquisition of language (beginning at approximately 1–2 years old), a child acquires the ability to understand perspective of knowledge, both his own and others. They also begin to understand contextualism of knowledge which leads them to realise that objects appear to be relativised to the point of view and their conditions of perception.²⁹ This makes some of their characteristics to be naturally regarded as a secondary quality (using the terminology of Locke), and thus relative to the subject and its condition (after dark, white paper is still "white" to an average person even though it does not seem like that). The problem here is not the fact that an ordinary man, not seeing things exactly the way they are, also believes that he perceives them this way (in his naive epistemology), but rather the fact that he knows that he does not perceive them this way. The latter undermines the suggestions of Price and Sellars: on one hand they are right that perception involves some non-inferential knowledge of its subject (and the relationship between perception and object), but it is not about involuntary imitation of perceptual judgment (referring to how the object is actually perceived) at the ontological level (referring to what the object really is). It is rather a kind of interpretation taking place already at the elementary level of perception based on certain patterns or cognitive structures available to the subject (culturally or phylogenetically developed).³⁰ Concluding, the analysis of common cognition itself, as well as common sense knowledge about the cognitive processes (natural

²⁷ For example, in his classic characteristics of common knowledge Moore clearly points to an assumption of a subjective relativization of knowledge: "many of the acts (of consciousness) depend on the changes that take place in our bodies."

²⁸ Cf. B.J. Wardsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development* (New York–London 1984), pp. 81–83.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. M. Tomasello, *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*, p. 202; *idem*, *Origins of Human Communication* (Cambridge–London 2008), pp. 73–82 (these cognitive skills are the basis of language acquisition).

³⁰ Cf. E.H. Gombrich, *Illusion and Art*, [in:] R.L. Gregory, E.H. Gombrich, *Illusion In Nature and Art* (New York 1973), pp. 193–243.

epistemology), indicate that they are not naive in the standard sense described here.

(2) *Transcendentally*. For this purpose we can appeal to the so-called transcendental argument which rests on the idea that from certain states of affairs we can infer some required conditions of their possibility. J. Searle tried to use this type of scheme with the aim to prove the validity of external realism however not as a theory but as a pre-theoretical, common approach to reality, a type of tacit knowledge, which he describes as Background of human actions and knowledge.³¹ To examine the possibility of relevant identification of naive realism with the common sense approach we should reverse the pattern of transcendental argumentation and seek instead the required conditions for some state of affairs, considering which hypothetical state of affairs could appear as consequences of certain conditions if we recognise them as the required ones. Let us assume that the earlier characteristics of the standard version of naive realism involves a set of necessary conditions of possibility for action and knowledge. Among these conditions, the key position belongs to the assumption which states that we know objects exactly as they are (or objects are always the way we now perceive them). Now let's ask what actions of a subject (including cognitive ones) could be constituted based on such necessary assumptions. Now it is easy to notice that, accepting such an assumption, a man could not act in such a way as he does and, for example, include perspective and contextual perception. Thus, if we assume that human cognitive activities require some initial subjective conditions of possibility, they cannot be assumptions which characterise naive realism.

(3) *Phenomenologically*. If naive realism was to be identical with the common-sense approach, its assumptions would have to be identical with what is defined as the natural attitude of the subject towards the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). However, the analysis of this natural approach, which was carried out in the framework of the phenomenology, indicates that the rudimentary cognitive approach constituted in this framework is of a different nature. It is characterized by, among other things, the ability to take into account the context of knowledge, and therefore the subjective perspective and the objective context. We must therefore emphasize that the analysis of the natural attitude shows, not only that at this rudimentary level the subject does not approach the reality in a naive way, but also that its natural, and common epistemology is not naive.

(4) *Adaptationally*. This argument would be a combination of the solutions suggested in points (1) and (2). The point here is to demonstrate that an entity whose cognitive system would work based on the assumptions of naive realism, would not be able to adapt to the surrounding environment. This version could be described as 'strong' as it would be based on the assumption that what we as humans take for the surrounding environment is identical with the reality existing objectively and independently of us, and therefore an entity with different cognitive structures could not survive in this environment. However, what can be concluded is, at most, the fact that we could not survive living as we do, formulating the same

³¹ Cf. J. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York 1997), pp. 177–197.

description of reality. If we understand the ‘environment’ or ‘reality’ to be similar to Kant’s conception ‘nature’ and therefore, as a complex structural phenomena arranged according to the laws of consciousness, then it will also be an effect, not the cause of adaptation (our image of world would be one of the elements of our adaptation to the world). So we should formulate an adaptive argument in a weaker, relativised version, stating that if the assumptions of naive realism were at the basis of knowledge, the beings known as *Homo sapiens* would not function the way they currently do, since their adaptive mechanisms would have to take another form, which, in turn, could lead to the conclusion that as they are differently adapted to the environment, they would just have to be different beings. Besides, this reasoning could be reversed: recognising the assumptions of naive realism as the effect of hypothetical adaptation, we should recognise the fact that it would have to refer to other types of entities functioning in different conditions (we could try to construct thought experiments describing the phylogeny of entities whose cognitive approach includes the assumption that they know things always exactly as they are).³²

(5) *Pragmatically.* It would be a variant of the above mentioned argument, except that if in the previous one, the object of consideration was an unintended and spontaneous application of the principles of naive realism, here we would consider a situation in which their adoption could lead to the desired cognitive effects. This solution is weak because it assumes that there is a set of common cognitive interests at the common sense level, common to all people and therefore we could demonstrate that naive realism does not allow for the implementation of some or all of these interests. Perhaps if these interests were reduced to biological survival, such a suggestion would be justified. In other cases the common performance level is too closely associated with the surrounding culture which, even if it maintains its biological minimum, might give it a peculiar form. Therefore, the thesis that the assumptions of naive realism are at variance with the realisation of our interests (practical and purely cognitive) could only be relatively true (or in the relativisation to cultural-historical conceptual scheme), which would take the form of common sense (*nomen omen*) tautology: naive realism does not usually allow for the realisation of our practical interests, except in cases where our practical interests coincide with the consequences of their assumptions.

These were some of the methods which allowed us to demonstrate that what had been earlier presented as the standard model of naive realism, cannot be identified with the assumptions underlying the basis of common knowledge or common sense natural attitude. Some of these solutions are more effective, some less so, but they do not only demonstrate that naive realism cannot be the real foundation of human action and knowledge, but also that you cannot regard it as an expression of pre-philosophical views on knowledge. The idea of the duplication of reality by knowledge, the homomorphism of the world and its image is rather a philosophical idea – the first attempt to construct a theory describing the cogni-

³² On this subject see e.g. H.C. Plotkin, *Evolutionary Epistemology and Evolutionary Theory*, [in:] H.C. Plotkin (ed.), *Learning, Development and Culture. Essays In Evolutionary Epistemology* (New York 1992), pp. 4–7.

tive mechanisms and cognitive relation. Common-sense thinking, however, rather involves elements of cognitive relativism, associated with perspectivism and contextualism underlying human perception. Thus, from the standpoint of common sense, the recognition that things are always exactly the way we see them would be unreasonable.

4. Naive realism in arguments

In my final point of the paper, I would like to show how the standard model of naive realism works in philosophical argumentation. I will discuss here two examples: the classic argument from illusion and the argument which I define as an unjustified disjunction

(1) *Argument from illusion*. This argument is used to demonstrate the fallacy of the position of naive realism, and later on realism as such. Its most general form roughly reads as follows: we assume that sense perception provides us with a reliable picture of the world, but there are some cases where sense perception provides us with a false picture of the world. What is more, we do not have independent criteria to distinguish between the reliable perception and the false one, therefore we have to acknowledge that sense perception in general cannot provide a reliable image of the world (but informs us about our sensations). The most basic example of perceptions which are regarded as false are perceptual illusions. In philosophical literature there are numerous examples; here I will refer to two authors only due to the fact that the criticism of their solutions relied on undermining the validity of identifying naive realism with common knowledge.

In his first *Meditation* Descartes forms objections against the ordinary treatment of the testimony of the senses, referring to the following everyday situations in which he states that the senses 'deceive' us: for example, objects which are distant from us appear smaller than they really are. Another well known argument is formed by Ayer in the framework of his criticism: a coin looked at from different angles once looks circular and once elliptical, which is a special case of the universal phenomenon which says that whenever we turn an object or change our perspective on it, it appears to us in a slightly different form. Because we cannot choose the right perspective, this argument proves that all sense perceptions of an object are false. We can conclude that we cannot build epistemology taking sensory cognition as the starting point (Descartes) and that we do not perceive objects as they are (Ayer, Price).

What is wrong with this reasoning? Well, it is in the initial assumption which assumes that naive realism defined as a view which holds that we always perceive things exactly as they are, is a valid description of a common or typical human cognition. If it was true, this argumentation could be accepted which means that if an ordinary man in his everyday life always believed that objects are always the way they appear, demonstrating that there are exceptions to this rule might be considered as an argument for the fact that common knowledge and our ideas about this phenomenon are wrong. However, as I have already demonstrated, it is not the case which means that common knowledge cannot be identified with what is characterised here as the standard form of naive realism. Therefore, the

conclusion derived from such considerations is wrong. To be more precise, it is not only the conclusion that our senses deceive us and that very often or maybe even always our perceptions are inadequate – because we could agree that is the case – but it is the thesis holding that is it commonly overlooked. We should rather say that the opposite is true – the general awareness of the limits of the sense knowledge is a condition for its possibility.

In other words, to make this argument work we should assume that examples used here are some kind of aberration from a norm that for the common man would be naive realism. Thus the fact that objects appear to become smaller when we increase distance or that the coin changes its shape when being rotated can be considered as an aberration (and an argument against common knowledge) only by someone who would assume that objects should not decrease with distance and that a coin should not change its shape. But this is unacceptable to a common sense. From the standpoint of the natural attitude it is not surprising that distant objects are smaller than close objects: we would be surprised if they were the same size or that if a coin would remain round in spite of being rotated. Besides, these arguments are not new – they have been already formulated by the critics of Descartes and Ayer, that is Mersenne and also Austin who wrote: “That a round coin should ‘look elliptical’ (in one sense) from some points of view is exactly what we expect and what we normally find; indeed, we should be badly put out if we ever found this not to be so”.³³

Shortly speaking, the argument from illusion, understood as the questioning of common views on knowledge, only works when we recognize that from the point of view common sense, the facts that are presented are aberrations from the norm constituted by the assumptions of naive realism. It is possible that someone might think in this way but certainly it would not be the so called ordinary man.

(2) *Unjustified disjunction*. This argument relies on using erroneous consequences resulting from identifying naive realism with common sense to defend a position which admittedly is not true, but it is also not common in a non-naive sense (but sometimes it is rather controversial and not clear). However, it is being defended by bringing matters to a head: either common knowledge is identified with naive realism (with all the consequences) or the non-naive and non-common position in the form of a “lesser evil”.

This scheme, usually used in order to defend phenomenalism, takes the form of a cross experiment. It relies on demonstrating that if the acceptance of one of the two competitive theories solving some issues (in this case the problem of human cognition) lead to absurd or false consequences, so automatically we have to accept the other. Such reasoning (based on the *modus tollens* scheme) would read as follows: if naive realism is real (things are always the way we perceive them), so in such a case things can at the same time have and do not have certain qualities (because different observers perceive them in a different way), which is absurd. In order to avoid it, we assume that we do not perceive objects, but sense data, and they can have, at the same time, different qualities to different

³³ J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (London 1962), p. 26. Cf. S.L. Reynolds, ‘The Argument from Illusion’, *Noûs*, 4 (2000), pp. 604–621.

observers. So, we perceive objects always the way they are or we do not perceive objects but sense data. To such an argument, Austin points out: "Further, it seems to be also implied (a) that when the ordinary man believes that he is not perceiving material things, he believes he is being deceived by his senses; and (b) that when he believes he is being deceived by his senses, he believes that he is not perceiving material things".³⁴ However, the sentence "»We never perceive sense-data« is not, as a matter of fact, equivalent to and interchangeable with »We always perceive material things«".³⁵ In other words, neither from the rejection of naive thesis about that we do not always perceive things exactly as they are does not mean that we only perceive sense data, nor does the rejection of the sense data theory result in automatic acceptance of naive realism. This reasoning has two basic flaws faults of cross-type arguments: firstly, it assumes that the fault is in one of the hypothesis being tested, not taking into consideration the fact that it can be placed in an inexplicable premise lying at the basis of this hypothesis (in this case in identifying naive realism with common knowledge). Secondly, it assumes that the elimination of one of the hypotheses indicates the correctness of the other, whereas in fact there could be a number of different solutions (in other words, we do not only have P and Q solutions but also – not taken into consideration, intentionally or not – Y, Z etc solutions).

It is evident then that in a case studied here we are faced with two faults: an assumption which identifies naive realism with common sense realism and the recognition that the possible theories of perception are limited to naive-common and phenomenalist. In a situation when we are aware of these faults, the argument for phenomenism has more of a persuasive character than that of a substantial character. Especially when an author suggests that he is conscious of the inconvenience of phenomenism but he proposes to adopt this position because otherwise we would be doomed to absurdities resulting from naively realistic theory of cognition. It looks as if someone has formulated a disjunction: "Either all birds are sparrows or nobody has ever seen a real sparrow" and then, because of an obvious fallacy of the first thesis, suggests to accept the latter as a "lesser evil." Perhaps such a choice is justified in cases in which the opposing theses embrace the whole spectrum of possibilities, but neither in this case, nor in the discussed problem of the theory of perception, does it happen.

5. Conclusion

As I was trying to show, naive realism in a standard form cannot be identified with a common sense approach as is usually suggested. Common sense has little to do with naivety; we should rather ascribe to it a kind of shrewdness which is the basis of awareness that things are not always such as they appear and that the observer may have a role in cognitive processes. Both of the issues are not problematic as such, but rather constitute a type of rule of cognitive tolerance included in the Background or as a part of *tacit knowledge* which relies on allowing

³⁴ J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

for a constant margin of error in the evaluation of a reality based on sensations. Because of it, common knowledge – from the adaptational point of view – is usually effective. If not, it could be due to the excess of naivety and the loss of contact with everyday life.

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The Early Wittgenstein on Thought and World*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to criticise several widely accepted interpretations of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Against some of them author argues that, firstly, the idea of isomorphism between language structures and the world is questionable and, in a significant sense, impossible; secondly, he claims that early Wittgenstein's philosophy is focused not so much on the language-world relation but rather on the thought-world relation.

There exists an old wives' tale regarding the system of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that is now set to gain popular currency. Namely, the *Core Curriculum* for secondary schools announced by the Ministry of Education in 2008 sets the following requirement for students sitting final secondary school leaving exams in philosophy: 'The student [...] will explain the analytical method in philosophy (using examples of the concept of isomorphism of the structure of language and the world in the early philosophy of L. Wittgenstein...)' [III.1.4].

The text has been prepared by a team led by Jan Hartman building on earlier proposals by Adam Grobler and Jacek Wojtysiak. Students will now stare at sentences such as 'If Jan Hartman walked briskly down Grodzka Street in Kraków last Friday evening, the old Sociologist's Cottage atop the Otryt mountain range no longer exists' trying to figure out what the (alleged) isomorphism of the structures of this sentence and the situation it represents consists in.

In this article, I would firstly like to explain that isomorphism between the structures of language and the world is at least questionable and to some extent even impossible. Secondly, and more importantly, I will try to demonstrate that Wittgenstein's early philosophy did not concern the relationship between *language* and the world, but that between *thought* and the world.

1. The ontology of objects versus the ontology of states of affairs

The opening proposition of *Tractatus* is: "The world is all that is the case" [1].¹ It is usually asserted that everything in the world constantly comes into existence,

* This paper is a slightly revised version of a text published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 4 [2] (2009), pp. 7–15.

¹ L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London 1922); *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. D.F. Pears, B.F. McGuinness (New York 1971).

undergoes changes, and vanishes, and all these changes occur in accordance with an invariable order, the so-called laws of nature. Wittgenstein rejects this view: “The exploration of logic means the exploration of *everything that is subject to law*. And outside logic everything is accidental” [6.3]. “The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena” [6.371]. The laws of nature are merely conventional forms by means of which we describe reality. Different sets of such laws “correspond to different systems for describing the world” [6.341], some of which may describe it for instance more simply than others, which does not entail that they are more true.

The central assumption of the *Tractatus* ontology – and a most bizarre one – is that the world divides into fragments called *states of affairs*, which are or are not the case independently of anything else being or not being the case. “Each item can be the case or not the case while everything else remains the same” [1.21]. This raises the question about credible examples. My broom may be in the corner or on the porch, while all other utensils may be where they are. But can *everything* remain the same? If my broom is in the corner, the garden parasol cannot, and the air movements must be different too. Moreover, the sequence of prior events must have been different in each case: if my broom is on the porch, something else must have happened than if it is in the corner. Common sense suggests that proposition 1.21 must be false – unless Wittgenstein wanted to say something different from what this sequence of words is ordinarily taken to mean. I am of the opinion that he wanted to say precisely what a ‘normal’ reader would understand his claim to mean, and he was led astray by a feature of propositional calculus.

“A state of affairs is a combination of objects” [2.01]. Wittgenstein is silent on what objects are: Democritus’ atoms, Hume’s elements of impressions, Leibniz’s monads, Plato’s ideas, Kant’s (unknown) things-in-themselves, or something else. He only asserts that objects are *simple* (without explaining what that means) and *unalterable*, that they are the substance, or what makes up the world, and that each has a certain *form*, which determines how it can combine with other objects into states of affairs.

Thus, there are two levels of ontology in *Tractatus*: an ontology of objects dependent on one another and an ontology of mutually independent states of affairs, made up of objects.

2. Names, elementary propositions, and complex propositions

Popular accounts of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy move from here directly to language. Here again there are two levels of analysis.

At the first, basic one, language is composed of names, each of which refers to some object. Names are combined into an elementary propositions, which shows that objects combine in the same way into a state of affairs. If the represented state of affairs is the case, the elementary proposition is true; if not, it is false. The postulate of the independence of states of affairs takes the form of the following assertion on the side of language: “One elementary proposition cannot be deduced from another” [5.134].

At the other level, propositions are truth functions of elementary propositions. In ‘ordinary’ logic, this is expressed by combining constituent propositions by means of logical constants into complex propositions. To avoid the claim that logical constants refer to something (for example that there are ‘logical objects’), Wittgenstein adopts a notation that does without such constants. To this end he uses truth tables – their presence in logic is in large part his contribution – putting the last column of the relevant table in the first parentheses and all constituent propositions in the second. In this notation the example sentence from the first paragraph will take the form: ‘(TFTT) (Jan Hartman walked briskly down Grodzka Street in Kraków last Friday evening, the old Sociologist’s Cottage atop the Otryt mountain range no longer exists)’; whence it can be immediately seen that the sentence is true if Hartman walked down Grodzka Street and the old Sociologist’s Cottage no longer exists, if he did not walk down the street and the cottage no longer exists, or if he did not walk and the cottage exists. Thus, our sentence would be made true by the occurrence of three different facts, so any isomorphism is out of the question.

Perhaps isomorphism occurs at the level of elementary propositions and the states of affairs they represent, then? This would seem to be suggested by the statement: “In a proposition there must be exactly as many distinguishable parts as in the situation that it represents. The two must possess the same (mathematical) multiplicity” [4.04]. It is preceded by the statement: “The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way. Let us call this connection of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture” [2.15]. There are various kinds of pictures: spatial (e.g. figure, map), coloured (it is not quite clear what Wittgenstein means here), and finally – where the pictorial form is logical form – logical (*cf.* 2.171 and 2.181). A proposition is a logical picture.

This immediately suggests that the relationships among the constituents of a proposition are of a logical nature. Again, it is clear what is meant only at the level of complex propositions, the truth functions of elementary propositions. When we move to elementary propositions, however, Wittgenstein has us believe they have *some* structure but is silent about what it actually is. He only explains that – in contrast to the standard predicate calculus – they will contain neither truth-functional operators nor quantifiers. They are to consist only of names but it is not known what kind of names (general or singular, naming objects or their properties, or perhaps relations between them, referring to material things or to impressions, etc.) and whether there are to be only names of one kind or of many kinds. Neither is it clear how names are to be combined with one another.

Obviously none of the words making up the sentence ‘Jan Hartman walked briskly down Grodzka Street in Kraków last Friday’ is a name in the *Tractatus* sense, and while the structure of this sentence can be called *grammatical*, it cannot really be called *logical*. At the same time, Wittgenstein asserts: “In fact, all the propositions of our everyday language, just as they stand, are in perfect logical order” [5.5563]. One could ask: What do you mean by they are, seeing that they are?

The reply seems straightforward: “the apparent logical form of a proposition need not be its real one” [4.0031]. To uncover the ‘real’ one, it is necessary to carry out a logical analysis of ‘ordinary’ propositions. Wittgenstein asserts: “A proposition has one and only one complete analysis” [3.25] – and again he offers not a hint as to how such analysis could proceed. We can only observe that nobody has performed the complete analysis of a proposition that would meet the *Tractatus* criteria.

The situation appears paradoxical: the ‘real’ form of propositions is to decide whether they are pictures of (possible) facts, whereas such a form in language – in the ordinary sense of the word – does not exist.

This dilemma clearly troubled Wittgenstein as he worked on the text of the book:

Let us assume that every spatial object consists of infinitely many points, then it is clear that I cannot mention all these by name when I speak of that object. Here then would be a case in which I *cannot* arrive at the complete analysis in the old sense at all; and perhaps just this is the usual case.

But this is surely clear: the propositions which are the only ones that humanity uses will have a sense just as they are and do not wait upon a future analysis in order to acquire a sense [17.6.15].

3. A thought as a proposition with a sense

The paradox will disappear – although numerous vague areas of a fundamental nature remain – if we look at *Tractatus* and note that Wittgenstein uses the words ‘language’ and ‘proposition’ in a manner that has little in common with their everyday usage. First of all, “A thought is a proposition with a sense” [4], where the word ‘is’ is clearly used in the sense of the *equality sign*. Add to this the statement that “The totality of propositions is language” [4.001], and by combining the two we get ‘The totality of thoughts is language’ (although one should add here certain ‘empty’ thoughts reflected in the laws of logic and mathematical theorems).

A little further down we find another important clarification. The grammatical, apparent, form of a proposition disguises the thought expressed by the proposition: “Language disguises thought. So much so, that from the outward form of the clothing it is impossible to infer the thought beneath it” [4.002].

Wittgenstein ushers in terminological confusion here by using the word ‘language’ in this last statement in the sense of *the totality of ordinary-language utterances*, which cannot be reconciled with the use of this word elsewhere. The ambiguity of the word ‘proposition’ is equally confusing. On the one hand, he makes the distinction between ‘a proposition’ and ‘a propositional sign’, the latter signifying precisely what the eye sees or the ear hears: “I call a sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign. And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world” [3.12]. On the other hand, just a little earlier he says: “In a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by

the senses" [3.1], although it should be "In a propositional sign..." (which is how the preserved earlier version of the text, published as *Prototractatus*,² reads). In the proper sense of the word 'proposition', as discussed in *Tractatus*, it is something the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard.

Let us take a closer look at the structure of the book. The ontological part, that is to say statements 1 to 2.063, is followed by a section devoted to thought. It opens with the statement: "We picture facts to ourselves" [2.1], and culminates in: "A logical picture of facts is a thought" [3]. (Both these statements are inaccurate: instead of 'facts' they should refer to 'possible facts'.) However, there is only half a page of enigmatic notes on thought, and then, in 3.1, Wittgenstein moves on to language, to which almost the entire remainder of the book is devoted. Small wonder that this short excerpt is missed by readers. Also, *Tractatus* omits some explanations of capital significance that are to be found in accidentally surviving notes from the time of World War I:

Now it is becoming clear why I thought that thinking and language were the same. For thinking is a kind of language. For a thought *too* is, of course, a logical picture of the proposition, and therefore it just is a kind of proposition. [*Notebooks 1914–1916*, note dated 12.9.16]³

And in a letter in English dated 19 August 1919, Wittgenstein replied to questions put to him by Bertrand Russell thus:

(2) [...] But a *Gedanke* [thought] is a *Tatsache* [fact]: what are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to those of the pictured *Tatsache*?" I don't know *what* the constituents of a thought are but I know *that* it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of Language. Again the kind of relation of the constituents of the thought of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be the matter of psychology to find out. [...]
(4) Does a *Gedanke* consist of words?" No! But of psychical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words. What those constituents are I don't know.⁴

By putting it all together, we arrive at a solution to our dilemma: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is not a book about the relation of *language* – in the everyday sense of the term – to the world but about what *thinking* has to do with the world.

Again, it has to be kept in mind that Wittgenstein uses the word 'thought' in a different way than it is done in ordinary language or in psychology. No quandary one is in, no question one asks oneself, nothing that is an 'internal' expression of

² L. Wittgenstein, *ProtoTractatus. An Early Version of Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, B.F. McGuinness, T. Nyberg, G.H. von Wright (eds.), transl. D. F. Pears, B.F. McGuinness (Ithaca 1971).

³ L. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, G.H. von Wright, G.E.M. Anscombe (eds.) (Oxford 1961).

⁴ L. Wittgenstein, *Letters to Russell, Keynes and Moore*, G.H. von Wright, B.F. McGuinness (eds.) (Oxford 1974).

desires or fears would be called a ‘thought’ by Wittgenstein. A thought is the internal picture of a possible fact, devoid of all emotion or aspiration. The picture is to consist of elements the configuration of which represents that this is the way in which objects making up the relevant fragment of the world are related to each other. We do not know what elements those are and what is the nature of the relations between them, so we picture the world without knowing what this picturing consists in.

We express our thoughts by means of propositional signs, again without understanding the nature of this process. “Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is” [4.002]. Sequences of sounds or marks on paper are of and by themselves dead, so to speak. A propositional sign is infused with life by the accompanying thought: “We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation. The method of projection is to think out the sense of the proposition” [3.11].

4. Logical analysis as investigation of thoughts expressed in propositions

If the principal subject matter of the investigations in *Tractatus* is the relationship between thought and the world, then why does almost all of the text concern language? Because, unable to examine thoughts, we can discover the nature of thinking by examining its linguistic expression. Although ‘language disguises thought’, Wittgenstein came to the conclusion that a powerful tool had emerged at the turn of the twentieth century that could reveal that thought: formal logic. His reference was the logical work of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. While he introduced truth tables, he made no contributions to logic himself. *Tractatus* is a work on the philosophy of logic.

The everyday word ‘is’ is used in at least three different ways, wrote Wittgenstein in a brief review published in 1913⁵: as a sign of existence (e.g. in ‘somebody is in this room’), as a sign of identity (e.g. ‘a human being is a thinking animal’), or as a sign of belonging to a class (e.g. ‘Socrates is a human being’). Thus, the use of everyday language disguises thought – it suggests that, as the word is the same, it has the same sense – whereas the use of the symbolic notation of logic, which uses three different symbols in the cases above, reveals it. The sentence ‘The king of France is bald’ looks like a simple one, whereas Russell demonstrated that it is the conjunction of at least three propositions that – still expressed in ordinary language – are as follows: ‘there exists an x that is king of France’, ‘there exists only one such x ’, ‘this x is bald’. Thus, whereas the grammatical form suggests that the thought expressed in the sentence is simple, logic reveals that it is a complex thought. And so on.

⁵ L. Wittgenstein, ‘On Logic and How Not to Do It’, *The Cambridge Review*, 34 (1913), p. 351.

We uncover the thought expressed in a propositional sign, when we perform its logical analysis. If, as has been mentioned, a thought and a state of affairs are to have the same logical diversity, then each of our thoughts is extremely complex. We express it in a condensed form, but ‘in reality’:

A proposition like ‘this chair is brown’ seems to say something enormously complicated, for if we wanted to express this proposition in such a way that nobody could rise objections to it on grounds of ambiguity, it would have to be infinitely long [19.9.14].

In the process of analysis, we begin to express with increasing accuracy what *we meant* when uttering a particular string of words. In the case of the author of an utterance, the analysis will be based on introspection: What did I consider true when formulating the propositional sign even if I did not make it explicit at the time?

And what is the situation in the case of the recipient of an utterance? If he understands the propositional sign, it means that mentally he has analysed it, supplying what the propositional sign left unsaid. In a word, the recipient has thought the sense of the propositional sign. Of course, since the recipient received an incomplete signal, he may – as is often the case in life – misunderstand it. What is he guided by in his subconscious analysis? Firstly, he is a member of a language community; since childhood he has been trained to understand words heard or read in a particular way:

Man possesses the ability to construct languages capable of expressing every sense, without having any idea how each word has meaning or what its meaning is [...].

The tacit conventions on which the understanding of everyday language depends are enormously complicated [4.002].

Secondly, an utterance usually occurs in some circumstances and is accompanied by other utterances: “What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly” [3.262]. When I hear the sentence: ‘My broom is in the corner,’ I usually know who says it and I often also know what broom is meant and which corner it is usually in. Further, based on a tacit agreement in my language community, I know that when the speaker does not specify explicitly which corner he means, he means the one where he usually keeps the broom.

Thus, how much the recipient is able to add to the propositional sign and to what extent his analysis is correct depends both on his language competence, in the ordinary sense of the word, and on his prior knowledge. Never, however, will he be able to reconstruct everything the sender meant. Even if there was an isomorphism – an identity of structures – between the sender’s thought and the possible fact depicted in his utterance, there would not be one in the recipient’s mind. When hearing: ‘Jan Hartman walked briskly down Grodzka Street in Kraków last Friday evening,’ he will not know if the event took place at, say, six or ten, whether he

walked on the right or on the left side of the street, let alone whether or not it was windy at the time, what JH was wearing, what the expression on his face was, etc. Thus, when we understand something that someone else says, any isomorphism between our thought and the structure of the depicted fact is out of the question.

Let us sum up what we have established so far: In our thoughts we create logical pictures of possible facts. This is done by combining certain mental elements – unknown to us – in certain ways, which represents that the objects – unknown to us – of which the world is made up are combined in the same way. We sometimes express our thoughts in a way that can be perceived through the senses, for example by means of propositional signs, relying on countless tacit agreements regarding the ways of encoding thoughts into signs. While an ordinary-language propositional sign disguises the thought as it often uses the same symbols where the thought represented different matters and, above all, it omits much of what is thought, the sender of the propositional sign knows what he means. By thinking the sense of the propositional sign, he projects it onto reality. The recipient, knowing – the knowledge is often called ‘tacit’ – the context of the utterance and the silent agreements regarding the understanding of propositions, reconstructs what the signs omitted and sorts out what the signs commingled. He is not able to reconstruct everything that ordinary language concealed, which is why there always exists the risk of misunderstanding, and understanding is never complete.

Even if somebody formulated a language sign, which upon a full analysis – performed by the sender – took the form of a giant conjunction of elementary propositions, the recipient could at best arrive – through his own analysis – at something that took the form of a giant alternative. The alternative would represent the set of possible facts, and if any one of those obtained, the recipient would consider the propositional sign true. Thus, even if there is an isomorphism between a possible fact and the sender’s thought, there is none between the structures of possible facts and the thought that emerges in the mind of somebody else under the influence of a propositional sign he hears or sees.

Perhaps this is why Wittgenstein came to the brink of solipsism and announced: “The world is *my* world” [5.62], for “*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world” [5.6]. While this question extends far beyond the subject matter of this article, there is another, brief explanation that is worth adding.

5. On the logical sources of the *Tractatus* ontology

Although Wittgenstein was unable to carry out a complete analysis of any proposition, he believed that a study of the logic of Frege and Russell, with some modifications, reveals what the world (my world) and thoughts (my thoughts) must be like in order for facts to be depictable by thoughts:

My difficulty surely consists in this: In all the propositions that occur to me there occur names, which, however, must disappear on further analysis. I know that such a further analysis is possible, but am unable to carry it out completely. In spite of this I certainly seem to know that if the analysis were completely carried out, its results would have

to be a proposition which once more contained names, relations etc. In brief it looks as if in this way I knew a form without being acquainted with any single example of it.

I see that the analysis can be carried farther, and can, so to speak, not imagine its leading to anything different from the species of propositions that I am familiar with [16.6.15].

The entire construction, outlined in sections 1 and 2 of the text, came into existence as a result of the fact that formal logic in its canonical form is divided into the logic of propositions and the logic of terms (names).

As far as the logic of propositions is concerned, complex propositions are regarded as truth functions of simple propositions, and all possible combinations of the truth and falsity of the latter are considered possible. Thus, if in the course of our analysis we reach the level of elementary propositions, each could – by analogy – be either true or false regardless of the logical values of the others. This leads to the following ontological claim: A fragment of reality depicted by an elementary proposition, that is to say a state of affairs, can be the case regardless of whether any other state of affairs is the case. (Hence one of the most controversial claims in the book: The laws of nature do not hold in the world, as they would bind states of affairs in extralogical ways.)

As regards the conclusions drawn by Wittgenstein from studying the logic of names, they depend on a number of further assumptions. The most important of those, taken from Russell, was that there do not exist empty names. At the level of ordinary discourse, there are many such names, e.g. ‘Pegasus’ or ‘the king of France’. The appearance of names that seem to be empty is a signal that logical analysis must be performed, for example by substituting ‘winged horse’ for ‘Pegasus’ or – in the Russellian analysis – by replacing the subject in the analysed proposition with a variable. In order for our thoughts to be pictures of the world, their elements must refer to something. Hence the claim that the names we would arrive at if we succeeded in carrying out a complete analysis of any propositional sign must denote something that is invariable.

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The Relationship between Soul and Body in Wittgenstein's Late Philosophical Investigations

Abstract

The article is an attempt toward a reconstruction Wittgenstein's solution of psychophysical problem. According to authoress, Wittgenstein rejects traditional dualistic conception of man as composed of soul and body, and he perceived the human as a psycho-physic whole. Knowledge about such a whole is a primary knowledge, and it is embedded in our reactions toward phenomena like sorrow, anger, joy, etc. According to this analysis, the soul-body distinction is to be seen as a secondary corollary resulting from the interpretation of experience.

1. Introduction

Interpreting Wittgenstein's writings to extract views on the relationship between the soul and the body may seem a strange project Wittgenstein is generally considered a philosopher of language. However, his late writings on the philosophy of psychology evidence that pigeonholing him in that fashion does not do justice to the extent or the actual nature of the subject matter with which he was occupied.

The direction of Wittgenstein's investigations after 1944, when he withdrew the second part of his *Philosophical Investigations*, then in the process of being written, (remarks on the philosophy of mathematics) and started to write down remarks on the philosophy of psychology instead, is not easy to pin down. Indicating a subject that could unify the remarks originating in the late period will necessarily – the author not having clearly stated or even hinting at one – be in the nature of a mere hypothesis. Still, what appears indubitable and beyond all controversy is that in the late and final periods of his creative life, Wittgenstein is occupied with the analysis of psychological concepts. These in turn – although from the perspective of the philosophy of language, they could seem to be only an attempt to establish the criteria for the correct usage of these concepts – admit an equally legitimate interpretation as a proposal for a position in the classic dispute over the psycho-physical constitution of the human being

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 4 [2] (2009), pp. 39–50.

2. Preliminary outline of the issues

Wittgenstein's remarks from the late period of his work share a common, critical nature. The author not so much wants to assert something (put forward a particular philosophical claim) but rather targets certain ideas he considers a reflection of a bias to which we succumb. By exposing the fallacious grounds on which they arise, he seeks to ensure that such convictions around which philosophical theories had grown disappear. Consequently, to place Wittgenstein's thought within the dispute concerning the psycho-physical constitution of the human being, it is necessary first of all to delineate that facet of the dispute which Wittgenstein considers to be a reflection of our misconceptions. This can be done most simply by recalling the fairly unambiguous position taken by Descartes in this regard.

According to that philosopher, the human being consists of two substances isolated from each other: the soul (or, if you will, the mind) and the body. What determines a human being's identity, what makes a person a particular being is his soul. The soul is what the first person singular pronoun refers to: the pure *I*, the self, that is each one of us individually. The human mental activity is an activity of the soul. All mental acts (thinking, wanting, but also erring) occur in strict isolation. Actions of the soul residing in the body take place in complete isolation. Between the soul and the body there is no cause-and-effect link, but what happens to the soul is reflected in the activities of the body and vice versa. There is a close parallelism between the spiritual substance and the physical substance, a parallelism guaranteed by God.

To anticipate the analyses in the further part of this article, it can be stated that Wittgenstein in no uncertain terms rejects the view of man as a composite being. The human being is not, according to that philosopher, a being composed of a soul and a body. What kind of being is man, then?

The denial of the position that a person is a composite being usually takes the form of conceptions in which man is a psycho-physical whole. Is that Wittgenstein's position? Given that he cannot be ascribed with the Cartesian position, it would appear that it must be. It would be futile, however, to search for such a conception in his writings. What is the purpose of all the criticism, one might ask, if there are no constructive proposals?

3. The path of Wittgenstein's answer

The position that man is a psycho-physical whole inseparable into parts, is only seemingly easy to adopt. The verbal sign of what would correspond to this position: 'psycho-physical whole', while not expressing the isolation, still indicates a distinction between the physical from the mental. The position one strives to abolish returns. Surprisingly, those who oppose this position despite their attempts not to make a distinction between what is mental and what is physical in the human being, act as if in spite of themselves. They try, as it were, to weld together something that becomes separated again the moment the effort ceases. The separation returns like a boomerang.

This is precisely the starting point of Wittgenstein's reflection on the psycho-physical constitution of the human being. He appears to be primarily occupied

with the ‘force’ with which the view of man as a being composed of the spiritual and the physical returns. As has been said, the interpretation one wishes to discard retains its impact force even when for ‘philosophical’ reasons we find it wrong. Therefore, we will not discover any attempt made by Wittgenstein to ‘at last’ bind the soul to the body, to make them – perhaps for the first time in the philosophical tradition – inseparable.¹ The uniqueness of Wittgenstein’s position in the dispute over the psycho-physical constitution of man lies in showing a path on which we really ‘know’ that man is a whole indivisible into a body and a soul, which path does not lead to the construction of a philosophical conception or even to deliberations on this subject. The reason is that the proper way to understand that man is not a composite being is a path that will not require the effort to ‘weld together’ the human being from the mental and the physical parts, which is always the case when one tries to see man as a psycho-physical whole. To show the path Wittgenstein performs an analysis of the picture that plays a primary role in our ideas about the composite nature of the human being. It is the picture of a soul inhabiting the human body.

4. The picture we succumb to

When do we use the picture of the human being as a soul enclosed in the body? We do it when we are to imagine what happens when a person experiences something, expresses emotions, carries out plans, etc. It seems to us in such cases that it is the person’s soul that actually does it, whereas the body is what reflects the sensations of the soul. We imagine that our emotional states and thoughts are ‘projected’ onto the body from the inside, and the body manifests outwardly what internally is a state of the soul itself. Here we use the picture of a puppet, which is animated by pulling cords invisible to others.

This picture becomes sharper when the parallelism between what goes on in the soul and what happens to the body is distorted. This is the phenomenon of pretending analyzed by Wittgenstein. This phenomenon can be seen as a limiting case of the parallel activities of the body and the soul. What does it consist in?

The picture of a soul enclosed in the human body comes forth when we imagine the ‘mechanics’ of how pretending some emotion or thought occurs. It seems to us that the soul internally does one thing, while the body (as it were at the request of the soul) does something else.

The fact that a person can behave in one way while feeling something else is an ordinary human experience. When we ourselves pretend, the picture of the soul and the body acting ‘separately’ does not appear with such clarity as when someone else is disingenuous to us. In the latter case we feel that something else is going on under the skin of the person’s body, that the person’s self ‘behaves’ differently. It seems to us that the inside of the person remains, so to speak,

¹ This issue is framed similarly by Dilman: The human being in Wittgenstein’s writings – a flesh-and-blood being inhabiting the world together with other people – is not a being established as a psycho-physical whole through philosophical reflection. If the human being is to be understood as a whole, this whole must be the starting point rather than the end point of deliberations on the human being. Cf I. Dilman, ‘Body and Soul’, *Philosophical Investigation*, 25 (2002), pp. 54–65.

genuine to itself of necessity, and what misleads us is the body. The soul makes a different face from that presented outwardly by the pretender

We say “The expression in his voice was genuine”. If it was spurious we think as it were of another one behind it. (PI 606)²

The ‘two faces’ explanation remains in effect as long as we explain to ourselves the mechanics of pretending. What happens, asks Wittgenstein exposing the absurdity of the interpretation that we use here, when someone stops pretending and the expression on his face becomes genuine? Does he make two faces then? And why does he not make them when he is disingenuous incessantly?

This is the face he shews the world, inwardly he has another one. – But this does not mean that when his expression is *genuine* he has two the same. (PI 606)

The picture through which we wish to see the experience of pretending is at odds with how it actually happens. Someone genuine in his behaviour does not experience any ‘close fit’ between the soul and the body. Neither does one experience the locations of the feelings of joy, anger or understanding someone, although one is confident that ‘it is all happening inside me’.

And how about such an expression as: “In my heart I understood when you said that”, pointing to one’s heart? Does one, perhaps not *mean* this gesture? Of course one means it. Or is one conscious of using a *mere* figure? Indeed not. – It is not a figure that we choose, not a simile, yet it is a figurative expression. (PI p. 178e)

When we think of sadness, for example, it seems to us that our sad soul as if notifies our body, which becomes sad ‘at the news’. The same *notification* mechanism is involved in situations that are, in a sense, the reverse of this, namely, when we imagine how we learn about what is happening in the outside world. It seems to us that our body – through the senses – notifies our soul about what the latter could not learn about due to being enclosed.

One is inclined to say: “Either it is raining, or it isn’t – how I know, how the information has reached me, is another matter.” [...] And what gives this ‘information’ the character of information about something? Doesn’t the form of our expression mislead us here? For isn’t it a misleading metaphor to say: “My eyes give me the information that there is a chair over here?” (PI 356)

What exactly does the picture we use contain? If we inspect the picture of a soul enclosed in the human body, it will be a picture of two persons exchanging

² PI in parentheses, followed by the number of the relevant remark or page is a reference to: L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford 1958).

information, engaged in a conversation. Depending on the situation, one or the other will assume the role of the notifier. When one is sad, the soul-person will report the sadness to the body-person; when the sound of an approaching storm is heard, the body-person will inform the soulperson (whispering what he has heard into the other's ear (?)).

What is surprising is that in this picture, in a way one does not notice, the body becomes equipped with a mind, and the soul is endowed with a body. Why do we do this? Perhaps because we actually cannot imagine a bodiless soul, whereas a spiritless body does not express anything.

I am inclined to speak of a lifeless thing as lacking something. I see life definitely as a plus, as something added to a lifeless thing (Psychological atmosphere). (Z 128)³

As has been said, Wittgenstein aims to demonstrate that the picture of a soul enclosed in the human body is, upon a closer inspection, a picture of a human being enclosed within the body of another human being. We encase the soul in a body, thus simply obtaining a human being, while the body is forever the human being (what we, upon reflection, describe as the soul acting inside it). This exercise must appear paradoxical in the light of the intention to conceive of the soul as something incorporeal. What would an incorporeal soul be?

The soul is said to *leave* the body. Then, in order to exclude any similarity to the body, any sort of idea that some gaseous thing is meant, the soul is said to be incorporeal, non-spatial; but with the word "leave" one has already said it all. Shew me how you use the word "spiritual" and I shall see whether the soul is non-corporeal and what you understand by "spirit". (Z 127)

Calling the soul incorporeal is a way to 'exclude any similarity to the body'. The reason for doing so is obvious. We think of the soul as what gives life to the body, so it cannot be corporeal itself. The very exercise of 'depriving' it of corporeality is questionable. We take away from it something that does not belong to it in the first place. And what do we want to achieve anyway?

The answer looks very paltry. The pure difference is obtained. Or rather a sense of difference, because the moment we move from the idea itself of an incorporeal soul to the use of such concepts as 'soul', 'spiritual', 'mental' etc., the 'body' of the soul seems to immediately spring back to where we took great pains to remove it from.

What am I believing in when I believe that men have souls? What am I believing in, when I believe that this substance contains two carbon rings? In both cases there is a picture in the foreground, but the sense lies far in the background; that is, the application of the picture is not easy to survey. (PI 422)

³ Z in parentheses, followed by the number of the relevant remark or page, is a reference to: L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, transl. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford 1967.

Wittgenstein points out that when we refer to the soul as incorporeal we ‘have in hand’ a picture, but we cannot use it, we cannot apply it. That is to say that the way we actually use the word ‘soul’ contradicts the picture associated with that word. We say that the soul leaves the body, inhabits the body, governs the body, etc., in doing which we attribute to the soul materiality, which it cannot have to begin with

“While I was speaking to him I did not know what was going on in his head.” In saying this, one is not thinking of brain-processes, but of thought-processes. This picture should be taken seriously. We should really like to see into his head. And yet we only mean what elsewhere we should mean by saying: we should like to know what he is thinking. I want to say: we have this vivid picture – and that use, apparently contradicting the picture, which expresses the psychical. (PI 427)

In using the expression, we are left with the corporeal soul, or simply the human being. This is because if we are to actually understand what happens to the soul (comprehend what the activity we ascribe to it involves), we must – in spite of our notions – ‘supplement’ it with a body. How should we understand this?

To explain it, Wittgenstein refers to the difference between what we say about our own souls and what we say about the souls of others. Emotional states, thoughts, sensations seem to us to be the activities of the soul itself only as long as we think about verbs such as to think, to rejoice, to suffer, etc. in the first person singular. As soon as we think them in the third person, the body is back as something indispensable. If somebody rejoices, it is not some ‘joyous basis’ of the joy he manifests that rejoices. In dealing with the ‘joyous body’ of another person, we deal with his soul itself, as it were.⁴

Instead of “attitude toward the soul” one could also say “attitude towards a human”. (LWPP II p. 38)⁵

Wittgenstein also presents the problem of the embodying of the soul in his analyses concerning our notions as to the mental life of non-human living creatures. The embodying of the soul that we perform when we want to comprehend human activity has one very important aspect. The body that encloses the soul is not any body but precisely a human body.

And can one say of the stone that it has a soul and *that* is what has the pain? What has a soul, or pain, to do with a stone?

⁴ Thornton draws attention to the fact that assigning psychological terms to specific beings is behavioural. What we assign them to immediately takes on human form – and that, obviously, is not the form of the soul (which, by definition, has no form), but that of the body. The homunculus fallacy, consisting in attributing psychological predicates to objects insufficiently similar to humans, paradoxically also applies to the human soul. Cf. S. Thornton, ‘Sempiternity, Immortality and the Homunculus Fallacy’, *Philosophical Investigation*, 16 (1993), pp. 311–314.

⁵ LWPP II in parentheses, followed by the relevant page number, is a reference to L. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. II, transl. C.G. Luckhard (Oxford–Cambridge 1992).

Only of what behaves like a human being can one say that it *has* pains.
(PI 283)

Why should the corporeality that makes ‘the behaviour of the soul’ comprehensible to us be human corporeality? After all we do ascribe certain spiritual states to animals too. We say that they long (for the owner), that they are afraid, that they dance with joy, etc. In some sense, perhaps limited, we believe in animal souls. However, such souls would not be clad in human bodies. What does Wittgenstein say to this?

In the first instance he draws attention to the fact that of the wide array of psychological concepts we have, only some are attributed to animals. For example, we say that a dog can feel fear but we do not say that it can feel remorse (Z 518). When we attribute certain emotional abilities to an animal while denying them others, it seems to us that we do so based on knowledge about their inner life. The matter will be even clearer if we consider examples of the attribution of certain emotional states to different species of animals: we can say that a dog longs for its owner but we will not say so of a fish in a bowl even though it will also usually have an owner. It appears to us that the difference lies in the inner lives of the animals, that it is a difference relating to the soul. In this connection, Wittgenstein notes:

Those who say that a dog has no soul support their case by what it can and cannot do. For if someone says that a dog cannot hope – from what does he deduce that? And whoever says that a dog *has* a soul can only support that with the behaviour he observes in the dog. (LWPP II p. 65)

We have grown so accustomed to projecting emotional states on the inner side (considering it the active centre concealed under a layer of skin) that it escapes our attention that our knowledge is based on the behaviour of a particular living creature. We are convinced that the range of an animal’s abilities has its roots inside it, from where it is read through some investigations. But even children know what animals feel and they can hardly be said to be familiar with the results of any investigations. What is given, what is the basis of our knowledge is the animal’s behaviour

We do not say that *possibly* a dog talks to itself. Is that because we are so minutely acquainted with its soul? Well one might say this: If one sees the behaviour of a living thing, one sees its soul. (PI 357)

How do we know how to interpret an animal’s behaviour? It seems to us that we deal with the pure movements of its body, which we interpret as manifestations of certain sensations based on knowledge about its inner life. But if this interpretation is discarded, what is left? The basis of our knowledge of animals’ mental life is, according to Wittgenstein, known to us much better than the results of any

research. That basis is human behaviour.⁶ What we associate with the activities of the soul (mental life), is so strongly linked to the human body that only similarities to that body allow us to attribute a 'psyche' similar to ours to other living creatures

"I assume that a picture swims before him". – Could I also assume that a picture swims before this stove? – And why does this seem impossible? Is the human shape necessary for this? (Z 531)

The issue of a 'corporeal soul' brings up one more question. If the body – the human body at that – plays such an important role in what can be described as understanding the life of the soul, could the soul itself not be eliminated as unnecessary? How then would we have to view the human being? Is ours a view of man as a soulless human body?

Imagine we were to encounter a human who had no soul. Why should not something like that occur as an abnormality? So a human body would have been born with certain vital functions, but without a soul. Well, what would that look like?

The *only* thing I can imagine in that case is that this human body acts like an automaton, and not like normal human bodies. (LWPP II p. 66)

Despite what the foregoing analyses seem to suggest, viewing the human body as soulless poses a certain difficulty. It is not as if such a viewpoint is unfeasible for us; if we try hard enough, we are able to regard the smile of another as a smiling human body. The difficulty is precisely that in order to do this we must do what we usually do not. This perspective takes a special effort. We take the soullessness of the human body as being tantamount to it being a machine. A soulless body is a robot, and while viewing the human being as a mechanically moving body, it is not how we usually regard people.⁷ Faced with a human affected by some

⁶ Anthropocentrism in attributing specific mental states to animals is also noticed by Churchill. However, unlike the present author, he denies that knowledge about mental life actually is analogical in character. In his argumentation, he emphasizes that we do not hypothesize about the 'inside' of animals. Understanding animals is in fact just as spontaneous as understanding people and is grounded in a social and biological basis, similar to ours. My reply: I can agree that we do not hypothesize about the mental life of animals based on their behaviour. We indeed see animals' behaviours as 'immediately' meaningful, but it is not the circumstances 'themselves' that cause us to attribute specific feelings to animals, because the circumstances are only invested with meaning by the animals' behaviours, so we must see those behaviours as being 'of some kind'. Cf. J. Churchill, 'If a Lion Could Talk', *Philosophical Investigation*, 12 (1989), pp. 113–317.

⁷ It is of course thinkable that the human being while not moving mechanically remains a machine, albeit a very subtle one. This point is made by Brunton, who adds that there is no penetration of the human body that would give us a more certain knowledge that the human being is a machine than considering him as a mechanically moving human body. In this context, Wittgenstein's 'reversed' metaphor, saying that no machine is like the human being, gains a new meaning. Cf. A. Brunton, 'A Non-Definitive Solution of the Free-Will Problem', *Philosophical Investigation*, 16 (1993), p. 238.

sensations, we deal not with a soulless body but with his soul itself, hence the paradox.⁸

Could the soulless one produce signs of pain? If he only screamed and writhed then one could still view this as an automatic reaction, but if he grimaced in pain and had a suffering look, then we would already have a feeling that we were looking *into him*. (LWPP II pp. 66–67)

We are getting at the heart of the problem here. We do not regard the human being as something deprived of a soul; indeed we often have the impression that we deal with the soul itself, but then again we cannot imagine a soul without its corporeality⁹ The metaphor of the soul encased in the human body breaks down, and yet we find it difficult to abandon it. Indeed, we feel compelled to use it.

Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must also be something boiling in the picture of the pot? (PI 297)

If steam is coming out of a pot, we know that something is boiling in it, which also allows us to see a pictured pot as a pot in which something is boiling. In the case of the human being the situation is, in a way, reversed: We first deal with the picture through which we want to see the human being and only then with the human being *per se* We understand what the human being is in a way that gives rise to paradoxes. By following this picture, in a way we go counter to our experience, to which both the bodiless soul and the soulless, mechanical body are alien Why do we follow it then?

5. Wittgenstein's philosophical credo

As was said at the outset of this article: the uniqueness of the substance of Wittgenstein's remarks on the psycho-physical constitution of man does not lie in his view on the matter as such Most of the remarks are, as has also been pointed out already, critical in nature: their thrust is against understanding the human being as a soul residing in the human body. An unmasking theme predominates Wittgenstein exposes this view by pointing out both people's susceptibility to it and its absurdity (paradoxicality). Yet, contrary to what one might think, by regarding the human being as a soul inhabiting the body we do not commit an error Or rather the error is not made by us; it is inherent in language. We are deceived by its forms of expression.

⁸ As rightly pointed out by Cook, that we also see the human soul when looking at the human body is reflected in the fact that, if we were able to regard the human being as the human body only, we would consider it no more a possible subject of sensations than, say, a stone. Cf. J. Cook, *Human Beings*, [in:] P. Winch (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (London 1969).

⁹ As Cavell poetically puts it: the spirit of the body is the body, just as the spirit of the wind is the wind. Cf. S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford 1979), p. 400.

We predicate of the thing what lies in the method of representing it. Impressed by the possibility of a comparison, we think we are perceiving a state of affairs of a highest generality. (PI 104)

We are, says Wittgenstein, held captive by pictures absorbed into our language (PI 94, 112, 115). In learning a language, we become so accustomed to its forms that we do not notice they are merely forms. These forms plunge us into a world of appearances

In our failure to understand the use of a word we take it as the expression of a queer *process* (As we think of time as a queer medium, of the mind as a queer kind of being. (PI 196)

Wittgenstein does not simply point out that the conceptions of the human being as composed of two different substances is erroneous, arising from mistaken premises. His important contributions in this regard include pointing out that this view impacts on us much more strongly than any philosophical view could. The reason for this is that its strength is not the strength of a conclusion stemming from specific reflections. The interpretation that compels us to see the human being as a soul inhabiting the human body is, as it were, always-already-at-hand as it is provided by the language used to talk about people's mental life. This explains the above-mentioned fact that although we can, on philosophical grounds, conclude that the view of man as a being composed of a soul and a body is erroneous, we still persistently 'cobble together' the whole human being out of two parts

For this reason it can be said that Wittgenstein's critical remarks are in the nature of proverbially 'reversing the tide with a broom': even if we acknowledge that the criticism is fair, we revert to the 'old' way of thinking about man the very next moment. This is because by admitting it we contradict what in some sense remains obvious to us. Why then should we discard this view at all?

There are two answers that suggest themselves. First, it has already been shown what difficulties the conception of the human being composed as a soul and a body can lead to. As a matter of fact, Wittgenstein's talent lies in unmasking what we take to be an expression of thought-through views but what in reality is a form of expression of our language (*cf.* the above-cited remark 196 in *Philosophical Investigations*). The proper picture of the human being regarded as the body inhabited by the soul is the picture of two persons (one inside the other) remaining in quasi-verbal contact. Once we realize this, our view supported by this picture appears simply laughable.

Demonstrating the absurdity of the view by exposing the attitude on which it is founded is, however, only part of Wittgenstein's philosophical strategy. In accordance with his intention, as such, the view of man as a soul inhabiting a body, which is not simply an erroneous view, cannot be rejected by pointing out its ridiculousness or incoherence. By drawing attention to the fact that there is a clash

between how we interpret our experience (how we explain it or how we imagine it) and how it actually proceeds, he proposes to demonstrate that what one arrives at by rejecting the erroneous interpretation is not a theory or view. This explains the fact, mentioned above, that one will not find in Wittgenstein a positive conception of the human being as a being composed of soul and body. What one arrives at as a result of Wittgenstein's critical remarks – and this applies to his entire philosophical activity – does not have the character of something new, something we learn as a result of discoveries made, but of something that has, in a way, always been around.

Not, however, as if to this end we had to hunt out new facts; it is, rather, of the essence of our investigations that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. (PI 89)

What is there in plain view when looking at a human being?

6. The whole human being

When do we 'know' it is the *whole* human being that is smiling, sad, has hopes, intentions, etc., rather than something inside the human being manifested outwardly by the accompanying parallel corporeality? It seems to us that one does not know it until one realizes it is so. For Wittgenstein it is the other way round. What we must refer to is our experience as such, even before the manner in which we want to see it so to speak 'kicks in'. How should we understand this?

In remark 283 of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein poses the following question: 'What gives us so *much as the* idea that living beings, things, can feel?' He replies:

Look at a stone and imagine it having sensations. – One says to oneself: How could one so much as get the idea of ascribing a *sensation* to a *thing*? One might as well ascribe it to a number! – And now look at a wriggling fly and at once these difficulties vanish and pain seems able to get a foothold here, where before everything was, so to speak, too smooth for it.

And so, too, a corpse seems to us quite inaccessible to a pain. – Our attitude to what is alive and to what is dead, is not the same. (PI 284)

What we react to is a human being, whose behaviour is meaningful to us.¹⁰ When experiencing a person as cheerful, pensive, anxious, etc., we react to him in a particular way, and the distinction into soul and body is alien to what that reaction 'knows'. Our spontaneous reactions to a human being as something having

¹⁰ The role of 'reactions' upon meeting another human being is emphasized by many interpreters of Wittgenstein's thought. Among other, Phillips argues that human reactions constitute the human being – thus they are primal relative to the 'recognition' of a human being as such. Hence, paradoxically, one need not come across a human being in order to react to him. Cf. D.Z. Phillips, 'My Neighbour and My Neighbours', *Philosophical Investigations*, 12 (1989), p. 116.

sensations contain our attitude to him as a psycho-physical whole¹¹ To put it simply, knowledge about this whole consists of our reactions: compassion when we see the suffering look of another human being, anxiety when somebody is enraged. The breakdown of the human being into the soul and the body emerges as secondary – as an interpretation through which one sees the experience, which in fact is alien to that interpretation

Thus, the uniqueness of Wittgenstein's voice in the dispute over the psycho-physical constitution of man does not consist in proposing a position according to which man is not a composite being. This is because the human being as a whole does not appear at the level of reflection, where he must always be 'put together' from parts. As a non-composite whole, he appears at the level of pure experience, that is, together with our reactions to a human being's sadness, joy, or anger, reactions that 'know' about man what no reflection expressed in language can know.

¹¹ The fact that we react immediately to a human being having certain sensations is, according to Malcolm, the most comprehensive answer to Wittgenstein's great philosophical problem of the existence of other minds. Reaction precedes the distinction between soul (mind) and body. Cf. N. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View* (London 1993), pp. 90–92.

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Overcoming the Justificationist Addiction*

Abstract

It is a simple, though ancient, mistake in the theory of knowledge to think that justification, in any degree, is central to rationality, or even important to it. We must cut forever the intellectual apron strings that continue to offer us spurious and unneeded security, and replace the insoluble problem of what our theories are based on by the soluble problem of how to expose their shortcomings. The paper will outline (not for the first time) the critical rationalism of Karl Popper, taking account of some recent criticism. A brief discussion of the status of the laws of logic provides an illustration of the power of the critical approach.

Fools give you reasons, wise men never try.
Oscar Hammerstein, *South Pacific*, 1949

Introduction

Critical rationalism is the generalization, from empirical science to the whole of our knowledge, of the methodological falsificationism (or deductivism) proposed by Karl Popper in *Logik der Forschung*¹ as an alternative to the then prevalent positivism and inductivism. After a brief account in §1 of the emergence of critical rationalism, I shall say something about three interlocked issues that remain unsettled: the futility of justification (§2), methodological objectivism (§3), and the status of logical rules (§4).

1. The Emergence of Critical Rationalism

At least in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the Vienna Circle and its confederates held that there exist only two varieties of knowledge: analytic knowledge, which is

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¹ K.R. Popper, *Logik der Forschung* (Wien 1934).

justified by formal proof, and scientific knowledge, which is justified by empirical verification; and only those statements that are in principle justifiable by one or other of these processes are, they maintained, amenable to rational discussion. While dissenting forcefully,² from their identification of the empirical with the verifiable, and from their repudiation of the whole of traditional metaphysics as meaningless, Popper did initially accept the doctrine that all serious investigations that are not purely formal must make some ‘appeal’, though not an uncritically obsequious appeal, ‘to the authority of experience’.³ According to falsificationism, our exclusive concern, outside the formal sciences, should be with those statements and systems of statements that can conflict with the reports of experience; that is, those statements that are empirically falsifiable. This is Popper’s criterion of demarcation of empirical science from what is not science.

There is a humdrum explanation for this insistence on falsifiability.⁴ The universal hypotheses that are characteristic of science are not, as an artless inductivism might suppose, certified in the act of being formulated; they have to be entertained before they can be empirically investigated, arraigned before they can be judged. Hypotheses are literally *prejudices*. How we handle them depends on how opinionated, or how inquisitive, we are. We may want to confirm our prejudices, or we may want to correct them. But confirmation teaches us nothing, and provides no more than psychological comfort. If empirical investigation has an objective purpose, therefore, it can only be to determine, as far as we are able to, how badly our hypotheses are in error. If observations or experiments are to succeed in identifying mistakes, the hypotheses under examination must be empirically falsifiable.

Sense experience is doubly demoted in this version of empiricism. Falsificationism regards observation neither as the origin of knowledge nor as its basis. The empirical method rests its decisions on observation reports, not because these reports are firm, which they are not, but because they are easily checked, and easily replaced if they are found to be untenable. Observation remains a primary scientific resource, but it is not a primordial source;⁵ it remains fundamental, but it is not foundational.⁶ The bankrupt enterprise of empirical justification, in which experience and induction were long-standing partners, is unceremoniously dissolved. Experience is reemployed in the new business of empirical falsification and criticism, but induction is permanently retired on an invalidity pension.

There being nothing immaculate about experience, the deductivist alternative to verificationism may be readily extended to any area in which viable objective criticism is possible. This is the philosophy of *critical rationalism*. Central to it is the realization that the process of reasoning can never provide justification, but

² K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London 1963), Chapter 11.

³ K.R. Popper, *Logik der Forschung*, §10.

⁴ D.W. Miller, *Out of Error. Further Essays on Critical Rationalism* (Aldershot–Burlington 2006), chapter 4, §1; D.W. Miller, *The Objectives of Science, Philosophia Scientiae*, 11 [1] (2007), pp. 21–43; §1.

⁵ K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, Introduction.

⁶ K.R. Popper, *Logik der Forschung*, §30.

it may provide criticism; and indeed, that the rational attitude consists wholly of openness to criticism, and of appropriate responses to criticism. Justification, conclusive or inconclusive, is revealed as neither possible, nor useful, nor necessary.⁷

2. The Futility of Justification

Critical rationalism **CR** was first sketched in Popper,⁸ where it was contrasted not only with Plato's mystical rationalism but also with *comprehensive* or *uncritical rationalism* **UR**, the traditional doctrine that we should believe or adopt only those propositions or policies that are justified by means of argument and experience. Popper argued that **UR** is an untenable position: 'a rationalist attitude must first be adopted if any argument or experience is to be [rationally] effective, and it cannot therefore be based upon argument or experience'. **UR** tells us not to accept **UR**.

If rationalism, in its traditional form, incorporates also the converse to **UR**, 'All justified propositions must be accepted' (as suggested by Cíntora),⁹ then the proposition '**UR** is unacceptable' may have to be accepted. But it is one of the merits of Popper's formulation of **UR** that although the acceptance of a proposition may be permitted, and even recommended, it is not demanded. (Properly understood, a conditional like 'if *A* is accepted then [its logical consequence] *C* has to be accepted' is not a conditional demand but an absolute prohibition.) This desirable feature of **UR** is inherited by **CR**. We cannot rationally demand reason, Popper admitted; no argument has force against a person who has renounced reason. Nor should we demand acceptance. But if we adopt the rationalist attitude, we may be able to exclude some instances of unreason. Too much weight has been placed on the unfortunate term, 'an irrational *faith in reason*', that Popper used here for a frame of mind that, in the same sentence, he described as tentative. No faith, no commitment, is involved in the adoption of the way of reason; it is a free act, open to criticism, and to cancellation, at any time.

According to **CR**, the initial adoption of a proposition or policy (**CR** included) is neither dictated by reason nor contrary to it; what is contrary to reason is only the retention of a proposition or policy that does not withstand serious criticism. Only a lingering attachment to the rational hegemony of justification explains Popper's use here of the term 'irrational'.¹⁰ The important question is not *Why should we be rational?*, which calls for justification of the rational attitude, but *What is objectionable (counter-productive, imprudent) about adopting a rational attitude?* The first question appears unanswerable if acceptance is subservient to justification (as it is in **UR**). The second question may be answered (perhaps only with the answer 'nothing') if rationality depends on criticism (as it does in **CR**). As we shall see in §4 below, reason may legitimately be used to attack the

⁷ D.W. Miller, *Critical Rationalism. A Restatement and Defence* (Chicago–La Salle 1994), Chapter 3.

⁸ K.R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London 1945), Chapter 24, §ii.

⁹ A. Cíntora Gómez, 'Miller's Defence of Bartley's Pancritical Rationalism', *Sorites*, 15 December 2004, p. 50. http://www.sorites.org/Issue_15/cintora.htm/

¹⁰ W.W. Bartley III, *The Retreat to Commitment* (London 1962).

use of reason, and rationalists ought not assume complacently that it will not be successful (though they may hope that it will not be). A continued failure to find fault with critical rationalism does nothing to secure it.

Where **CR** has a decided advantage over **UR** is in the irrefragable distinction between a circular or question-begging argument (a *petitio principii*), in which what is concluded is first assumed, and a critical argument (a *reductio ad absurdum*), in which what is concluded contradicts what is assumed. An argument advanced to justify, conclusively or inconclusively, the truth, or the acceptability, of a proposition is almost inevitably circular;¹¹ in any case, it must fail to achieve its purpose. A critical argument, in contrast, can succeed even if it assumes what it seeks to refute. I have no intention of defending the integrity of most forms of relativism, or of idealism, but it is no criticism of them if, in their arguments against realism, they presuppose the realist doctrines that they finish by rejecting. For one example of such a criticism, see the backboard of Harris.¹² In ‘What Use is Empirical Confirmation?’¹³ (§1), I quoted several other passages in which what look like decent critical arguments are unjustly called into question in this way, and in §4 below I shall discuss another one. For all that they are persistently mistaken for each other, there is a world of difference between a *petitio* and a *reductio*.

The chimera of reasonable belief and of justification may entice those, such as Musgrave,¹⁴ who want to be instructed in what they should believe. Others will prefer to use their own judgement, and to appeal to reason only where it is effective; that is, as a check on palpable error. Musgrave admits that the ‘rational adoption’ of his approach (also called ‘critical rationalism’, I am sorry to say) ‘involves circularity’.¹⁵ Disregarding the fact that it was to escape a similar predicament that **UR** was discarded, and replaced by **CR**, he pleads in extenuation that ‘any general theory of reasonable belief will be subject to the same objection’.¹⁶ We can avoid such obscurantism, however, by more thoroughly purging justification from our system; not only with regard to propositions, where Musgrave too repudiates it, but with regard to policies, where he embraces it.¹⁷ There is no need to indulge Musgrave’s oppressive conclusion that ‘if Miller’s interpretation is correct, then so-called “critical rationalism” is another name for irrationalism’.¹⁸ ‘[S]cience may

¹¹ D.W. Miller *Critical Rationalism...*, Chapter 3, §3.

¹² J.F. Harris, *Against Relativism* (Chicago–La Salle 1992).

¹³ D.W. Miller, ‘What Use is Empirical Confirmation?’, *Economics and Philosophy*, 12 [2] (1996), pp. 197–206.

¹⁴ A.E. Musgrave, *Essays on Realism and Rationalism* (Amsterdam–Atlanta 1999), p. 335.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 331.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*; see also A.E. Musgrave, *Saving Science from Scepticism*, [in:] F. D’Agostino, I.C. Jarvie (eds.), *Freedom and Rationality: Essays in Honor of John Watkins* (Dordrecht–Boston–London 1989), p. 318.

¹⁷ D.W. Miller, *Out of Error...*, Chapter 5, §4; for criticisms of Musgrave’s position, from other justificationist perspectives, see D.G. Mayo, *Critical Rationalism and Its Failure to Withstand Critical Scrutiny*, [in:] C. Cheyne, J. Worrall (eds.), *Rationality and Reality: Conversations with Alan Musgrave* (Dordrecht 2006), pp. 63–96, and A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism and Critical Rationalist “Induction”*, [in:] I.C. Jarvie, K.M. Milford, D.W. Miller (eds.), *Karl Popper: A Centenary Assessment*, Vol. II (Aldershot–Burlington 2006), §4.

¹⁸ A.E. Musgrave, *Saving Science from Scepticism*, p. 310.

[...] be a rational enterprise [...] in the sense associated with deontological rationality: science is rational because or the extent to which the disputes which arise within the scientific community are addressed within a framework of discursive rules which are themselves implicit in the so-called circumstances of method'.¹⁹

The craving for justification and intellectual security resembles an addiction, even an infantile addiction. The more enthusiastically we try to satisfy it, the more insistent and unsatisfiable it becomes.²⁰ We must learn to grow out of it.

3. Methodological Objectivism

Critical rationalism sees a continuity between animal knowledge and human knowledge. Much of our knowledge is inherited, some of it is discarded, more is acquired. With luck, darwinism says, a species can become well adapted to a stable (or regularly varying) environment. Its organs (its stomach, its eyes, its immune system, and so on) can come to serve well some task or tasks. They incorporate an endosomatic *knowledge how* concerning which it makes little sense to speak of truth, let alone justification or reasonableness. Some organs may seem to be better suited to the present environment than are others, or may strike us as simple and elegant, but adaptation is not truth and simplicity is not justification. If there is any endosomatic *knowledge that* as well as this endosomatic *knowledge how*, it too is not justified (for, as we have seen, justification is not an option), and it is rarely better than a fair approximation to the truth.

Epistemologically we are highly developed animals, not more. We may know more than brutes do, but we do not know it better. Our biologically encoded *knowledge that*, should there be any, is like all animal knowledge: unjustified and usually untrue.

If linguistically formulated knowledge, which resembles an exosomatic organ, is different, it is because we are different methodologically. What is distinctive about humans is not *instrumental rationality*, where we are often inferior to other creatures, but our *deliberative rationality*; and what is fundamental to all deliberation is the critical approach. Where we differ from brutes is in our ability consciously to evaluate our organs, to improve (and also to amplify) our knowledge. But critical scrutiny, however rigorous, provides only delusory justification. The aim is truth, but criticism would hardly be needed if truth were easily obtained. Exosomatic knowledge is not a species of belief. Human knowledge, for the most part, is *unjustified untrue unbelief*.

This is to state succinctly an important component of critical rationalism, its *methodological objectivism*, its concern with logical relations among items known, rather than with psychological relations among those who are in the know, or between knowers and what they know. Our most important knowledge, according to Popper²¹ is shared knowledge, or even detached knowledge; at least it must

¹⁹ F. D'Agostino, *The "Optimum" Aim for Science*, [in:] F. D'Agostino, I.C. Jarvie (eds.), *Freedom and Rationality: Essays in Honor of John Watkins*, p. 256.

²⁰ D.W. Miller *Critical Rationalism...*, Chapter 2, §3.

²¹ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford 1972), especially Chapters 3 and 4.

be detachable on demand, since the evaluation and criticism of a hypothesis, or a suggestion, normally requires that it be outside the knowing mind; in short, that it be formulated in an intersubjective and public language. Echoing Musgrave,²² Schramm²³ has recently revived the objection that this kind of objectivism is an epistemologically unrewarding position: the problem of induction, in particular, is said to become quite trite when it is formulated objectively, and is interesting only when it is formulated in subjectivistic (and justificationist) terms. Referring to Popper's statement²⁴ of the problem of induction 'in an objective or logical mode of speech',

Can the claim that an explanatory theory is true or that it is false be justified by 'empirical reasons'; that is, can the assumption of the truth of test statements justify either the claim that a universal theory is true or the claim that it is false?

Schramm²⁵ complains that, depending on the status of the terms 'assumption' and 'claim',

we have either (a) an objective logical problem *but not the problem of induction*, or we have (b) a (subject-related, or 'subjective', as Popper calls it) version of the problem of induction *but not a logical problem*.

As [in case (a)] the 'justifying' relation takes propositions as arguments and, thus, must be an objective semantic relation, it would be better not to speak (misleadingly) of justification, but, rather, of logical consequence, logical implication, or some other suitable and semantically explicable relation [...]. And indeed, even though it may sound somewhat exaggerated to call it a logical *problem*, this is, after all, a purely logical question to which there is a trivial answer [...]. Thus, if the 'solution' of the problem of induction consists in nothing more than in the mere recognition of the asymmetry of falsifiability and verifiability, then this would constitute neither an original nor a particularly specific achievement of Karl Popper, but, rather, a commonplace hardly deserving any further discussion.

Popper's logical formulation of the problem of induction is thus dismissed. But there is more to the problem than what is recounted here, as Popper himself went on to emphasize,²⁶ in places resorting to needlessly justificationist language: there is the problem of explaining how experience, or better, experiential reports, have a bearing on our knowledge; if you like, how we 'learn from experience'. There is not only a problem of psychology here, but also the objective problem of specifying the methods we should employ to bring our (objective) knowledge into contact

²² A.E. Musgrave, *Saving Science from Scepticism*, p. 322; A.E. Musgrave, *Essays on Realism and Rationalism*, p. 317; and many minor variations on the same theme.

²³ A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism...*, §1.

²⁴ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, Chapter 1, §5.

²⁵ A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism...*, §1.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, Chapter 1, §§7–9.

with (objective) reports of experience. True, this is not a problem solely about propositions. But methods can be objective too, and can be discussed and evaluated without thought for the thought processes of those who operate them. The main purpose of *Logik der Forschung* was, I take it, to state an objectivist (even behaviourist) methodology appropriate to the trite negative solution of the purely logical problem of induction there propounded. It should perhaps be mentioned that this logical problem, and its solution, when cast in the language of preference, are not as uncomplicated as Schramm suggests. In Chapter 5, §4, of my *Out of Error*, it was claimed that what we may deduce from an experiential report that contradicts the theory *A*, but not the theory *C*, is that, with respect to truth, *A should not be preferred to C*; and that this is enough to enable some modest but unjustified learning from experience. (The first part of this claim, but hardly the second part, should have been credited to Howson.²⁷) This logical point is not vitiated by the objection²⁸ that the truth of the experiential report is itself unjustified.

Our objective methods not only lack justification; they sometimes let us down. This is the obvious response to the misgivings of Haack,²⁹ that fallibilism is a doctrine with little bite if it is restricted to the domain of propositions. Haack herself ventures exactly this response,³⁰ but expresses concern that the existence of fallible methods is not enough to explain the full extent of fallibility in science. Although perhaps true, that is hyperbolic worry, since no one wants to suggest that all our wrong turns are open to objective rationalization. It does not at all detract from the objectivity of much of our knowledge that it was created by knowing subjects; that our evaluations and criticisms of what is known are *our* evaluations and *our* criticisms,³¹ and that they are on occasion misguided and even foolish. Our objective shoes are not the less objective for being created by shoemaking subjects and repaired by cobbling subjects.

It is an objective matter how to play a game such as chess, or croquet and, as Schramm³² rightly notes, a different matter how to play it well. Most chess players, and all croquet players, are thinking subjects, and the tactics a player employs are of course the outcomes of his thought processes. But his tactics do not relate to his state of mind (though his preparation for the game may do so); in the main they are concerned with the objective state of play, and perhaps with the objective state of mind of his opponent (whom he may wish to unsettle). Those of us who hold that human knowledge calls for objective analysis and explanation of this kind need not deny the existence also of subjective factors, for example

²⁷ C. Howson, 'Popper's Solution to the Problem of Induction', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 34 [135] (1984), p. 144.

²⁸ A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism...*, §3.

²⁹ S.W. Haack, 'The Wheel and Beyond', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 29 [2] (1978), p. 187; S.W. Haack, 'Epistemology with a Knowing Subject', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 33 [2] (1979), pp. 326f.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 328.

³¹ *Ibidem*. A.E. Musgrave, *Saving Science from Scepticism*, p. 322; A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism...*, §1.

³² A. Schramm, *Methodological Objectivism...*, §2.

what Polanyi³³ calls the tacit dimension of knowing. There is some knowledge, especially *knowledge how*, that its possessors seem unable to pass on to others.³⁴ But the ubiquity of *how-to-do-it* books makes it evident that, with thought, most of what we think of as subjective knowledge can be objectified. One internet site recently consulted identifies 33 articles offering advice on how to breastfeed, 35 articles on how to walk backwards, and 193 articles on how to shake hands.

4. The Status of Logical Rules

The fecundity of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments was contrasted in §2 above with the sterility of those arguments that commit the traditional fallacy of *petitio principii*. From a *reductio* we can learn that we were wrong. From a *petitio* we learn nothing.

An understanding of the distinction is never more valuable than when we confront the problem of how the rules of logic (which, for simplicity, are here taken to be the natural deduction rules of classical logic) are themselves to be evaluated. In his autobiography, having characterized a deductively valid argument as one that admits no counterexample, Popper wrote:³⁵

The view is still widely held that in logic we have to appeal to intuition because without circularity there cannot be arguments for or against the rules of deductive logic: all arguments must presuppose logic. Admittedly, all arguments make use of logic and, if you like ‘presuppose’ it, though much may be said against this way of putting things. Yet it is a fact that we can establish the validity of some rules of inference without making use of them.

He gives as an example the rule of identity $A \vdash A$, but offers no glimpse of how we can establish, without using identity, that this rule admits no counterexample. Nor does he make it obvious that this rule can be consistently avoided in attempts to establish the validity of other rules, such as the rule of indirect proof, which might themselves have been used in some form in the course of establishing the validity of the rule of identity.

A more promising approach, more congenial to critical rationalism, is to volunteer the rules of deduction as conjectures, and to invite all comers to identify counterexamples to them. Critical rationalists will not be flustered by the platitude that, here as elsewhere, a failure to falsify a conjecture provides no shred of justification for it; a rule is not justified because no counterexample has been found. More worrying is the suggestion (attributed by Nilsson to Apel, Habermas, Thomas Nagel, and Bartley³⁶) that there is some small set of logical laws that are immune to criticism because, it is claimed, they constitute an ‘absolute presup-

³³ M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (London 1967).

³⁴ J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London–New York–Bombay 1843), Book II, Chapter III, §3.

³⁵ K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest* (London–Glasgow 1974), §32.

³⁶ J. Nilsson, *On the Idea of Logical Presuppositions of Rational Criticism*, [in:] I.C. Jarvie, K.M. Milford, D.W. Miller (eds.), *Karl Popper. A Centenary Assessment*, vol. II, pp. 109–117.

position of argument', and can thus be conclusively and irrevocably justified by showing that any attempt to deny them leads to 'performative contradictions'.³⁷ This transcendental mode of argument leads easily to a rejection of the view that 'someone who is trying to inquire and reason *rationally* can and should treat logic as criticizable and revisable'.³⁸

It is evident that this predicament is similar to that encountered in §2 above. I hope to show how elegantly critical rationalism can once more weather the storm,³⁹ and in particular, to give a more satisfying response than that given by Nilsson, who also writes from the perspective of critical rationalism. He poses the problem like this:⁴⁰

The idea [...] seems to be applicable [when an attempt is made to establish the invalidity of some rule]. If the criticism is aimed at showing that an inference rule is invalid, then it is of course problematic if in the critical argument one presupposes the validity of the same rule. Similarly, if the argument is intended to show that an inference rule is unjustifiable and hence that reasoning in accordance with it is not rationally permitted, it is problematic if the critical argument is based on the presuppositions that the rule is valid and that reasoning in accordance with it is rational.

This is plainly incorrect, unless 'presuppose' means something decidedly odd. If a rule R of inference is supposed (or presupposed) to be valid, and a counterexample is derived with its assistance, then either the rule R itself, or one of the other rules used in the derivation, or one of its premises, is not valid. If R is the only rule used in the derivation, then if R is valid it is invalid. It follows that R is invalid. It does not follow that the counterexample to R was not validly derived, since most invalid rules have valid instances (as Nilsson recognizes). It is much the same even if R is a version of the rule of indirect proof, such as

$$(0) \Gamma, A \vdash \neg A \text{ therefore } \Gamma \vdash \neg A.$$

Let B be the assumption that R unfailingly transmits validity. If $\neg B$ can be derived from B and true premises Γ by use only of rules that are assumed valid, and the rule R , then R does not unvaryingly transmit validity. Note that although $\neg B$ is a true conclusion, it is validly derived from the premises Γ only if the derivation $\Gamma, B \vdash \neg B$ is valid. This may not be the case, since R may have been used in that derivation.

Nilsson's reaction is to seek to eliminate the use of the rule R .⁴¹

Let us assume, again, that we have found what we think is a counterexample to an inference rule R and that we use it in order to argue that R is invalid.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

³⁹ D.W. Miller *Critical Rationalism...*, Chapter 4, §3c.

⁴⁰ J. Nilsson, *On the Idea...*

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

It might well be the case that we *actually* [...] make use of the rule R in question [...]. But when criticizing a rule like R does one really *have to* use the very same rule that has been targeted for criticism?

No, I do not think that one has to [...].

First of all, there will be other inference rules than R. It is reasonable to think that an argument presupposes a certain inference rule only if that rule is actually used in it. It may be possible to reconstruct one's critical argument in such a way that R is not used in any step.

He indicates other strategies too: we might 'propose a *more strict* version of R, a version that contains a *restriction* that rules out all cases with the special characteristic of the counterexample'.⁴²

Dispensing with, or abridging, the rule R seems quite the wrong approach. The force of the counterexample to R would be massively enhanced if we were to eliminate from its deduction not R but *all the other rules of inference*, for we should then sidestep the Duhemian problem of which rule to blame. But it is no easy matter to reduce so drastically the set of rules employed in the production of a counterexample to a logical rule R. It depends on how the necessary semantic information is presented in the truth tables, but some rules for $\rightarrow$ and $\wedge$, for example, may be required in order to infer this information; and the rules of $\wedge$ introduction and $\exists$ introduction seem required to license the move from a counterexample to R to the statement that there is a counterexample to R (that is, to the statement that R is invalid). There follow three brief illustrations of what can be achieved. (*TA* means that *A* is true and *FA* means that *A* is false.)

Let R be the rule $A \vdash C$, and let *B* be a true sentence. Using R we may derive *FB* from *TB*. What we assumed, and what we have just derived from it using R, namely *FB*, show that the instance $B \vdash B$ of R has a true premise and a false conclusion; that is, is a counterexample to R. By the definition of invalidity, R is invalid.

For a more complex example, let R be the rule of affirming the consequent or *modus morons* (**MM**): $A \rightarrow C, C \vdash A$. Suppose that we understand the standard truth tables for $\neg$ and $\rightarrow$ to provide us with the following two conditionals:

- 1) $T(\neg A \rightarrow A) \rightarrow TA$,
- 2) $F\neg A \rightarrow TA$.

To construct a counterexample to **MM**, we adopt the premises *B* and $\neg B \rightarrow B$, where *B* is some true sentence. Then by **MM** we may deduce $\neg B$. From our assumption *TB*, we may deduce $T(\neg B \rightarrow B)$, by (1) and **MM**. We may also deduce $F\neg B$, by (2) and **MM**. This means that using **MM**, and the two semantical statements (1) and (2), which are not in contention, we have derived the false conclusion $\neg B$ from the true premises *B* and $\neg B \rightarrow B$. The rule **MM** admits a counterexample.

There is also the possibility of using a more direct semantics in order to bypass the problem of how the appropriate semantic constraints are extracted from the

⁴² *Ibidem*.

truth tables. The final example, which provides a counterexample to **MM** without a single use of **MM** (or any other rule), does just this. Someone who thinks that the Amazon is in all respects the greatest river in the world may assent unexcitedly to the truth of the sentence *If the Amazon is not the longest river in the world, then it is (anyway) the most voluminous*, and also to the truth of its consequent, while denying its antecedent.

These examples are far from perfect, since what has been demonstrated in each case is only that if the rule **R** is valid then it is not valid. There remains the problem of discharging the assumption of the validity of **R**; that is, of inferring unconditionally (by (0)) the invalidity of **R**. I plan to return to this problem elsewhere. But it must be recognized that these improvements are more decorative than structural. Whatever other rules may be required for its production, a counterexample is not vitiated because it assumes the validity of that rule of inference whose validity is under threat.

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**Conventions, Styles of Thinking and Relativism.
Some Remarks on the Dispute between
I. Dąmbaska and L. Fleck***

Abstract

My comments are focused on the debate between Izydora Dąmbaska and Ludwik Fleck. In the course of their debate, which took place in the 1930's, they discussed some basic issues of epistemology, focusing on the problems of the sources of scientific knowledge, objectivity of knowledge, and truth. The aim of the paper is to place their debate in a the historical context and to demonstrate the novelty of Fleck's arguments, especially in comparison with Thomas S. Kuhn's later contribution. I also examine the dominant interpretations of Fleck's theory of knowledge, as well as the reasons for which his philosophical ideas, especially *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* (1935) have fallen into the philosophical oblivion. I argue that Fleck's views, although innovative, were less radical than it is commonly thought.

My comments focus on the polemic that ensued in the 1930s between Izydora Dąmbaska and Ludwik Fleck. The authors involved in it either directly or indirectly referred to the fundamental questions of the theory of cognition: the question of the sources of scientific knowledge, objectivity of knowledge (its communicability), relative nature of scientific knowledge, truth. The small total volume of texts which directly referred to the views of the adversaries as well as the place where the dispute occurred (Lvov, a geographically peripheral part of the "civilised world" at the time) could suggest that this was just a minor episode in the history of thought, not worth mentioning. A slightly more detailed account of some of the circumstances surrounding this event will, I hope, confirm Jan Woleński's opinion that this was a meeting of two different epistemological projects – Dąmbaska's fundamentalism and Fleck's pioneering anti-fundamentalism – that it still possesses

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 1 [1] (2006), pp. 27–45.

the qualities of a discussion of quite contemporary authors,¹ and that it occurred in one of the major centres of the philosophical and scientific thought of the West.

It is also worth stressing at the beginning that as the Dąmbska-Fleck debate was going on, there was a quite commonly expressed belief in Lvov that many fundamental questions of epistemology had to be rethought given the results obtained at the time. Similar voices were coming from other centres as well, from Vienna and Warsaw among others. In Lvov itself, for example, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz – an important figure from Izydora Dąmbska's closest circle – summing up his treatise *The World-Picture and the Conceptual Apparatus* stated that his conclusions could be treated as a significant modification of the *Copernican idea of Kant*.² Ludwik Fleck, an amateur philosopher from outside the Lvov-Warsaw School, called for the adoption of a new programme for practising the theory of cognition, a programme rejecting many of its classic problems,³ while a young professor from the Jan Kazimierz University, phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, proposed a radical reorientation of the entire traditional philosophy.

These were the circumstances in which Izydora Dąmbska was systematically looking for answers to questions concerning the understanding of law in science, the possibility of laws of physics being true, the possibility of overcoming scepticism, the boundary between irrationalism and scientific cognition, the relation between conventionalism and relativism.⁴ Her clash with L. Fleck was in this process a crucial point bringing together threads referring directly to the problem of incommensurability of scientific theories and epistemological relativism. The matter needed rethinking also because in the 1930s K. Twardowski's 1900 diagnosis⁵ seemed insufficient anymore. Concluding his reflections on the so-called relative truths, Twardowski said that the wide spread of relativist views did not mean that they had any theoretical underpinning, that they could be justified.⁶ New arguments in favour of relativism, put forward by, among others, some advocates of conventionalism, as well as the broadened scope of the meaning of the term required new references. What may be described as a characteristic manifestation of these new tendencies was the voice of Leon Chwistek, who was active in Lvov in the 1930s and who was notably one of the few authors talking favourably about L. Fleck's epistemological ideas. This is what wrote about relativism:

¹ J. Woleński, *Szkola lwowsko-warszawska w polemikach* [*The Lvov-Warsaw School in Polemics*] (Warszawa 1997), p. 194.

² Cf. K. Ajdukiewicz, *The Scientific World Perspective and Other Essays, 1931–1963*, J. Giedymin (ed.) (Dordrecht–Holland–Boston 1978), p. 86.

³ L. Fleck, 'Zagadnienie teorii poznawania' ['The Problem of Epistemology'], *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 39 (1936), pp. 3–37; cf.: *Cognition and Fact. Materials on Ludwik Fleck*, R.S. Cohen, Th. Schnelle (eds.) (Dordrecht–Boston–Lancaster 1986), pp. 79–112.

⁴ The issues listed here come from the titles of I. Dąmbska's works published in Polish in the 1930s.

⁵ K. Twardowski, *O tak zwanych prawdach względnych* [*On the So-Called Relative Truths*], [in:] *Księga Pamiątkowa Uniwersytetu lwowskiego ku uczczeniu pięćsetnej rocznicy fundacji Jagiellońskiej Uniwersytetu krakowskiego* (Lwów 1900) [repr. in: K. Twardowski, *Wybrane pisma filozoficzne* [*Selected Philosophical Writings*] (Warszawa 1965), pp. 315–316].

⁶ Twardowski assumed that what was characteristic of the relativists was their readiness to acknowledge the existence of "relative truths".

[...] relativism is regarded as a socially dangerous doctrine. On the other hand, *absolute duty, absolute goodness and beauty, and absolute police regulations* are seen as the foundations of a wise social organisation.

[...]. The history of the customs of all periods and all countries shows that absolute criteria are almost always applied to others and only rarely to oneself. I think, however, that those people who apply them consistently to themselves are the most dangerous, because they believe that, being without sin, they have the right to throw stones at others.

Interpreting relativism as an opportunistic doctrine which allows us to accept the theory that is beneficial at a given moment involves mixing the concept of internal conviction with a cliché that has been uttered.

The fact that we see various possibilities does not mean that we are going to deviate from our own path. This would happen, if we considered our path to be the only one, because we affirm each deviation as an unavoidable necessity.

Common sense is needed to expose hypocritical arguments dictated to us by a *longing for getting to know the absolute truth* [last emphasis mine – K.S.]”.⁷

Parties to the dispute

Izydora Dąmbska and Ludwik Fleck may be considered to be part of the same generation.⁸ Both graduated after WWI from the Jan Kazimierz University in Lvov. Dąmbska studied philosophy (Professor Kazimierz Twardowski’s Philosophical Seminar) and Polish, while Fleck studied medicine. After graduation, until the outbreak of WWII they moved in different circles: she was associated with philosophy,⁹ first as Twardowski’s assistant, then as a teacher in a grammar school;¹⁰ he worked in laboratories (bacteriological laboratories), initially under Rudolf Weigl and after a few years as an independent researcher.¹¹ Their meeting in philosophy was possible also because Fleck had been interested in the issues of the theory of cognition since the 1920s and in the 1930s he emerged as a competent scholar whose articles were accepted by *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, a periodical associated with

⁷ L. Chwistek, *Granice nauki* [*The Boundaries of Science*], (Lwów – no date given (book published in 1935, quoted after: L. Chwistek, *Pisma filozoficzne i logiczne* [*Philosophical and Logical Writings*], vol. II (Warszawa 1963), pp. 228–229.

⁸ I. Dąmbska lived between 1904 and 1983, L. Fleck – between 1896 and 1961.

⁹ Years later I. Dąmbska mentioned the following philosophers – in addition to her master K. Twardowski – who had influenced her philosophical development as well as choices of research topics: M. Wartenberg, K. Ajdukiewicz, R. Ingarden, W. Witwicki, H. Elzenberg, M. Schlick, W. Tatarkiewicz, T. Czeżowski and T. Kotarbiński (cf. I. Dąmbska, ‘Podziękowanie’ [‘Acknowledgment’], *Ruch Filozoficzny*, 36 (1978), p. 127).

¹⁰ Detailed information about Professor Dąmbska’s moving life story is to be found in a book edited by J. Perzanowski, *Izydora Dąmbska 1904–1983* (Kraków 2001).

¹¹ Fleck’s life is less well-known. The basic facts are presented in, e.g. W. Sady, *Fleck. O społecznej naturze poznania* [*Fleck. On the Social Nature of Cognition*] (Warszawa 2000).

Twardowski's school. He published his first article on epistemology written entirely by himself in 1927.¹² That he was not a typical amateur interested in philosophy and sociology of knowledge can be seen in his subsequent publications from the mid-1930s: a study entitled *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache*,¹³ presenting a highly original concept of knowledge, as well as two long articles: *O obserwacji naukowej i postrzeganiu w ogóle* [*Scientific Observation and Perception in General*]¹⁴ and *Zagadnienia teorii poznawania* [*The problem of Epistemology*]. These were the works that provoked a reaction from I. Dąmbska, who devoted a part of her article *Czy intersubiektywne podobieństwo wrażeń zmysłowych jest niezbędnym założeniem nauk przyrodniczych?* [*Is the Intersubjective Similarity of Sense Perception a Necessary Presupposition of the Exact Sciences?*]¹⁵ to a criticism of Fleck's views. This situation is probably the main reason why Fleck is treated as a *critic* of the Lvov-Warsaw School of philosophy,¹⁶ the third generation of which was represented by I. Dąmbska. In my opinion, this is not a precise diagnosis. It is misleading, because it blurs the real diversity of views within Twardowski's school and suggests that Fleck was opposed to the entire school. In some important respects, the position of the author of *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* coincided with, for example, K. Ajdukiewicz's views from the first half of the 1930s, which are not, after all, presented as *criticisms* of the Lvov-Warsaw School. If we were to look for a group of scholars whose views Fleck opposed, we could point to the Vienna Circle and its supporters.¹⁷ I think that Fleck's position is sufficiently encapsulated by the remark that he was a "freelancer" in the philosophy of the period. He was an amateur who was able, in an extraordinary manner, to use his own research practice as well as reflections of sociologists and philosophers¹⁸ to formulate an alternative description of the development of scientific knowledge. The "extraordinary" nature of Fleck's achievements as an epistemologist was recognised by the philosophical community

¹² L. Fleck, 'O niektórych swoistych cechach myślenia lekarskiego' ['On some Specific Features of the Medical Way of Thinking'], *Archiwum Historii i Filozofii medycyny oraz Historii Nauk Przyrodniczych*, 6 (1927), pp. 55–64 (transl. in: *Cognition and Fact. Materials on Ludwik Fleck*, pp. 39–46).

¹³ Published in Basel in 1935 [transl.: L. Fleck *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago–London 1979)].

¹⁴ *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 38 (1935), pp. 57–76; cf. *Cognition and Fact. Materials on Ludwik Fleck*, pp. 59–78.

¹⁵ *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 40 (1937), pp. 288–294. The subject of the article had been earlier presented by Dąmbska at the 3rd Polish Philosophical Congress in 1936. Fleck's polemical reply: 'W sprawie artykułu p. Izydory Dąmbskiej w *Przeglądzie Filozoficznym*' ['In the Matter of the Article by Mrs Izydora Dąmbska'], *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 41 (1938), pp. 192–195.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. S. Borzym, *Panorama polskiej myśli filozoficznej* [*A Panorama of Polish Philosophical Thought*] (Warszawa 1993), pp. 243–244.

¹⁷ The remark is valid with the proviso that this applies to the early stage of the Viennese's views.

¹⁸ R. Merton stresses the substantial influence of W. Jerusalem, a sociologist of knowledge, with whose works Fleck became familiar during his stay in Vienna. Fleck himself also mentions other sociologists, e.g. E. Durkheim and his school, L. Lévy-Bruhl and L. Gumplowicz. For T. Schnelle, important points of reference for Fleck's thought in Lvov were the views of K. Twardowski, L. Chwistek and K. Ajdukiewicz.

only several decades later. The circumstances which led to this revision can be described as a miracle even by non-believers:¹⁹ after years of complete neglect, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* T. Kuhn briefly mentioned Fleck's inspiring role in his search for the right approach to the mechanisms of scientific cognition.²⁰ The popularity of Kuhn's historicism gave a strong impetus – as a kind of side-effect – to the studies of the original concept presented in *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache* and to the work on its translations into other languages.

Elements of the theoretical background of the dispute

An assessment of Dąmbska's and Fleck's contributions will be facilitated, if we refer to the solutions of some philosophical problems, which were a point of reference in the discussion about relativism and, as it was put in the following decades, the problem of incommensurability of scientific theories.

Without getting into a systematic overview of the ideas discussed in Lvov,²¹ I would just like to point to elements of various positions that shaped the Lvov polemicists, especially I. Dąmbska. In my opinion, of particular importance are the following: K. Twardowski's solution to the problem of relative truths, A. Tarski's approach to truth in deductive sciences, the radical programme of consolidating knowledge proposed by the Vienna Circle, and K. Ajdukiewicz's original reception of French conventionalism. These conceptions can be regarded as triangulation towers of sorts, helpful in determining the shape of the field of theoretical disputes in Lvov in the 1930s.

TWARDOWSKI.

In an article written in a period when the Lvov-Warsaw School was being formed, Twardowski describes relativism as a stance acknowledging the existence of the so-called relative truths, i.e. "[...] judgements that are true only under certain conditions, with some reservations, thanks to some circumstances; thus,

¹⁹ Here is one element of this chain of coincidences describing the fate of Fleck's book in an account by R. Merton: Fleck's book "[...] was published in 640 copies. [...]. About 200 were sold; nearly half of the copies were destroyed in Leipzig during the war, while the rest – about 200 copies – were eventually recycled in 1966, when the publisher lost all hope of ever selling them. We do not know who bought these 200 copies; we know, however, that no fewer than 7 copies from the first Swiss edition are available in public libraries in the United States [...] as well as university libraries", with two copies being available on the east coast (Princeton University and Harvard University, where T.S. Kuhn worked). Cf. *Introduction*, [in:] R. Merton, *Teoria socjologiczna i struktura społeczna* [*Social Theory and Social Structure*] (Warszawa 2002), p. 11. (As we can see, this is also an unintentional commendation for the generosity of people making decisions concerning the funds for the purchase of new books for the best American university libraries and for us Poles this is an opportunity for some deep reflection). Kuhn, who in 1949 or 1950 was checking one of the footnotes in Reichenbach's work, would have been unable to get to know the Lvov doctor's concept without it.

²⁰ The circumstances in which Kuhn discovered Fleck's book are described in e.g. T. Kuhn, *Foreword*, [in:] L. Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, pp. VII–XI; and R. Merton, *Teoria socjologiczna...*, pp. 10–12.

²¹ Detailed information about I. Dąmbska's circle can be found in J. Woleński's works; cf. e.g.: *Filozoficzna szkoła lwowsko-warszawska* [*The Lvov-Warsaw Philosophical School*] (Warszawa 1985).

such judgements are not true always and everywhere”,²² and argues that there are no such relative judgements; on the contrary “[...] each true judgement is always and everywhere true, therefore, it follows that judgements that were to be true not always and not everywhere but only under some conditions and in some circumstances are not, never have been and never will be true”.²³ For Twardowski, of key importance is the distinction between “utterance” (statement) and “judgement”, and indication that the relativists’ fundamental error was to equate judgement and its linguistic expression – statement (utterance). According to Twardowski, judgements and not statements are carriers of truth. Judgements are mental (psychological) creations²⁴ and, consequently, absolute truth can be attributed to them (they are absolutely true). The act of judging occurs *in concreto* and there is no doubt as to its result (truth). This is not the case with statements understood as linguistic equivalents, “images” of judgements, specific judgements. The form of statements (e.g. being brief, generalised formulations) often makes it possible to interpret them in a way that makes the “natural bond” between a specific judgement (uttered at a specific time and in specific conditions) and a statement that expresses it go unnoticed. Consequently, the same underdetermined, elliptical statement is associated with two different judgements and sometimes it is referred to as true, sometimes as false.²⁵ In Twardowski’s view, the threat of relativism can be thus easily avoided – it is enough to formulate statements carefully and, in the case of an elliptical statement, to remember that veracity or falsity is attached to the judgement accompanying that statement.

In Twardowski’s reflections examples of statements that are candidates for being termed relative truths illustrate our daily experiences. The author devotes little attention to scientific cognition. He notes briefly that all scientific hypotheses and theories “[...] always bear a lesser or greater degree of probability and are never certain”, i.e. that none of them “[...] can be said to be true, but always only that it is probable”.²⁶ Therefore, the relativists cannot take examples from science to illustrate the view concerning the relativity of truths, because science does not use them.

Expanding the perspective, the author of the article about relative truths claims that relativism is a logical consequence of epistemological subjectivism, a view whereby “[...] judgements which we, people, pronounce, may be true only for us; a judgement that is true only for us, may be and very likely is wrong for creatures capable of passing judgements, but organised differently from

²² K. Twardowski, *O tak zwanych prawdach względnych* [*On the So-Called Relative Truths*] of 1900, quoted after: K. Twardowski, *Wybrane pisma filozoficzne* [*Selected Philosophical Writings*] (Warszawa 1965), p. 315.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 316.

²⁴ I would like to note that Twardowski’s concept of judgements is not a variant of psychologism, as my abbreviated account might suggest.

²⁵ In the example discussed by Twardowski, an individual considering the statement “it is raining” uttered at a specific time in Lvov on the Castle Hill will have no doubt recognising it as true (or false). This statement in connection with the judgement it expresses will remain such (respectively, true or false) for ever.

²⁶ K. Twardowski, *O tak zwanych prawdach względnych*, pp. 326, 327. Echoes of this conclusion can be found in Dąmbska’s works from the 1930s.

us”.²⁷ Twardowski believes that this view can be defended at the cost of rejecting one of the foundations of our thinking, the logical principle of contradiction. However, this leads to the end of all rational argumentation.

Attempts to explicate the term of truth were made in the following years by many members of Twardowski’s school. In this respect, worthy of particular note in the inter-war period were J. Łukasiewicz, S. Leśniewski and A. Tarski.

In a work²⁸ directly preceding the Dąmbska-Fleck polemic, 32-year-old Tarski specifies the meaning of the concept of truth for the formalised languages of deductive sciences. The author manages to remain in compliance with the classical intuitions of understanding truth and give a formally correct definition of a true statement, a definition that does not lead to antinomy. Tarski’s result makes us realise, for instance, that of one of the conditions of becoming free from the liar’s antinomy is a precise distinction between two level of language, the so-called objective language, to which the analysed sentence *p* belongs, and a metalanguage, within which we state whether or not *sentence p is true*. While this operation can succeed in the case of specific “artificial” languages (from deductive sciences), it cannot be carried out in a natural language (treated as a universal language). Consequently, when following Tarski’s reflections, we cannot successfully free ourselves from antinomy in analyses involving a natural language and using the concept of truth.

THE VIENNA CIRCLE.

Lvov philosophers were in close, often direct contact with the Vienna Circle and its satellites. Izydora Dąmbska was a good example of such relations – in 1930 she went on a scholarship to Vienna, taking part, for example, in meetings of Schlick’s Seminar. Later she also took part in a unity of science congress under the patronage of members of the Circle. Fleck’s case is not as good an example of this opinion, though he, too, followed the Viennese’s proposals very closely.²⁹

It is not easy to present a concise, non-stereotypical description of the Vienna Circle given the variety of positions of the Circle members and the surprisingly quick evolution of the views of the various authors, the best example of which are R. Carnap’s successive works from the 1920s and 1930s. On the other hand, it is easier to say how the Circle was perceived in Lvov among Twardowski’s

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 328.

²⁸ A. Tarski, *Pojęcie prawdy w językach nauk dedukcyjnych* [*The Concept of Truth in the Languages of Deductive Sciences*] (Warszawa 1933). As I intend just to provide an outline of the circumstances surrounding the Dąmbska-Fleck polemic, I will limit myself only to a brief note concerning Tarski’s achievement. The consequences of Tarski’s great result were varied and have been systematically described over the last few decades. Given the nature of the Dąmbska-Fleck polemic, I would like to note the presence of M. Kokoszyńska among Dąmbska’s closest friends. Kokoszyńska, inspired by Tarski’s works, suggested around 1936 that the concept of true statement be relativised to the meaning we assign to statements (*cf.* M. Selinger, *Źródła semantyki Tarskiego w poglądach przedstawicieli szkoły lwowsko-warszawskiej* [*The Sources of Tarski’s Semantics in the Views of Representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School*] (Wrocław 2005).

²⁹ Paradoxically, it was to a remark made by H. Reichenbach, who was associated with the Circle, in one of his works that Fleck owes the initiation of a process of bringing him back from obscurity after WWII.

associates and followers, on the basis of the approaches to logical empiricism in K. Ajdukiewicz's and I. Dąmbska's publications.³⁰

When talking about the Circle, in addition to calls for the elimination of metaphysics from knowledge, the place and role of philosophy, and the idea of the unity of knowledge the authors also took into account and critically commented on the "technical measures" used to achieve these objectives. Dąmbska in particular saw the criterion of the sense of expressions as a too restrictive a solution, one that led to cases of a special kind of relativism (the same statement may make sense and be nonsensical at the same time). On the other hand, she took a favourable view of Schick's description of "being empirically given" – that which is expressible is cognisable, i.e. structures and relations, and not the sensual contents between which these relations are established. Drawing on this conviction, Dąmbska distanced herself from Carnap's early concept of uniform system of knowledge that can be reduced to sensual experiences and qualities, as the ultimate foundation of cognition (*Der logische Aufbau der Welt*). She saw in it a poorly justified forecast introducing the readers into the "uncertain ground of predictions", because the qualities themselves (sensation contents) "[...] are not, as we know, cognisable".³¹

Just as lukewarm was the reception in Lvov of the idea of limiting philosophical studies of science to investigating the logical syntax of the scientific language (idea promoted by, e.g. Carnap).

AJDUKIEWICZ.

The radical conventionalism advocated by K. Ajdukiewicz in the 1930s³² is one of the most frequently discussed concepts of the Lvov-Warsaw School. That is why let me refrain from a more detailed description of the various elements of Ajdukiewicz's construct and just note that he presents a directive concept of meaning and considers the consequences of the existence of languages with specific characteristics: which are connected and closed. As he sees it, the acceptance of these conditions makes it possible to make H. Poincaré's earlier position of "moderate conventionalism" more radical and to claim that "Of all the judgements which we accept and which accordingly constitute our entire world-picture, *none* is unambiguously determined by experimental data; every one of them depends on

³⁰ I. Dąmbska, 'Kolo Wiedeńskie. Założenia epistemologiczne Kola i niektóre ich konsekwencje' ['The Vienna Circle. The Epistemological presuppositions of the Circle and Some of Their Consequences'], *Przegląd Współczesny*, 125 (1932); K. Ajdukiewicz, *Kierunki i prądy filozofii współczesnej* [Movements and Trends in Contemporary Philosophy], first published in 1937, reprinted in: *Język i poznanie* [Language and Cognition], t. 1 (Warszawa 1985), pp. 249–263; K. Ajdukiewicz, *O tzw. neopozytywizmie* [On the So-Called Neopositivism], first published in 1946, reprinted in: *Język i poznanie*, t. 2 (Warszawa 1985), pp. 7–28. I have selected some of the threads from the texts listed above.

³¹ I. Dąmbska, 'Kolo Wiedeńskie...', p. 384.

³² It is presented in his articles from 1934: 'Sprache und Sinn' ['Language and Meaning'], *Erkenntnis*, 4 (1934), pp. 100–138; 'Das Weltbild und die Begriffsapparatur' ['The World-Picture and Conceptual Apparatus'], *Erkenntnis*, 4 (1934), pp. 259–287, and 'Naukowa perspektywa świata' ['The Scientific World-Perspective'], *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 37 (1934), pp. 409–416; cf. also: K. Ajdukiewicz, *The Scientific World Perspective...*, pp. 35–66, 259–287, 111–117. I would like to note that the author abandoned the position of radical conventionalism in 1936 under the influence of A. Tarski's arguments.

the conceptual apparatus we choose to use in representing experimental data. We can choose, however, one or another conceptual apparatus which will affect our whole world-picture.

Otherwise put: only so long as an individual uses *fixed* conceptual apparatus, will experimental data compel him to accept these judgments. He might employ another conceptual apparatus, on the basis of which the same experimental data would no longer compel him to accept these judgments, for in the new conceptual apparatus, the original judgments do not occur at all”.³³ The term “conceptual apparatus” denotes in the quoted fragment “the set of all meanings which attach to the expressions of a closed and connected language”.³⁴ Ajdukiewicz’s definition of a closed and connected language has an important ramification: two conceptual apparatuses either are identical or have no common elements.

The position of radical conventionalism also leads to a conclusion that whereas it is possible to assess the truth of judgements with a specific conceptual apparatus by means of which we express the world, it is not possible to say whether judgements coming from a different, “alien” conceptual apparatus are true (or false). Even if a sentence from a different conceptual apparatus, say A_2 , is an expression identical in its form to A_1 , recognised by us, from “our” conceptual apparatus, for fundamental reasons there is no possibility of deciding whether the judgement associated with it is true or not. Closed and connected languages provide us with separate, incomparable world perspectives. It is not possible to translate statements from one world perspective into statements from another world perspective. Though there is a single method for verifying the truth of judgements, its results (determining whether or not the various judgements are true) are relativised to the conceptual apparatus within which the process takes place. Our “[...] own unfavourable judgment of the sentences of a foreign world-perspective there stands a conflicting positive judgment on the part of one, who make use of the conceptual apparatus corresponding to that world-perspective”.³⁵ There is no impartial side: “The epistemologist therefore is not suited for the role of an impartial umpire in the struggle between two world-perspectives for the title of truth”.³⁶

The Dąmbska-Fleck Polemic

Dąmbska’s critical stance on Fleck’s concept emerged in her analyses of the problem of intersubjective nature of scientific cognition presented in the already mentioned article *Czy intersubiektywne podobieństwo wrażeń zmysłowych jest niezbędnym założeniem nauk przyrodniczych?*.³⁷ Taking as her starting point Gor-

³³ K. Ajdukiewicz, *The Scientific World Perspective...*, p. 67.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 69.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 117. Ajdukiewicz questions the possibility of the existence of a connected universal language which, unlike the particular perspectives provided by the various cases of conceptual apparatuses, would make it possible to compare various “true” perspectives. On the other hand, a non-connected universal language would be regulated in various meaning fields by different logics “totally unconnected with each other”.

³⁷ The article was part of a series of studies of epistemology and philosophy of science written

gias' argument, "Even if something can be known about, knowledge about it cannot be communicated to others",³⁸ the author suggested the following alternative:

"[...] 1) either the follow-up to Gorgias' argument is false and nothing can be said about the intersubjectivity of science on its basis; 2) or it cannot, in principle, be decided on and, thus, logically, is useless as a premise of reasoning; 3) or it is true and from it stems a denial of the intersubjectivity of cognition and thus either impossibility of science or change of the view of its essence; 4) or, in the end, it is true, but the intersubjectivity of science does not assume its negation. The first option is accepted more or less dogmatically by various epistemological movements opposing solipsism, while the third option leads to agnosticism, sometimes irrationalism in the theory of cognition. The second and the fourth options, in a narrower formulation, will be the subject of the present reflection. A question arises: if it were true that the argument concerning the intersubjective similarity of sensations is false or cannot really be settled, then would it also be true that statements of natural sciences are devoid of intersubjectivity? Or, to put it more simply: is the intersubjectivity of empirical statements determined by the necessarily intersubjective similarity of sensations? The task of further reasoning will be to attempt a justification of a negative answer".³⁹

Reflecting on a broader spectrum of possible solutions to the problem indicated, Dąmbska argues for an approach acknowledging that the objective cognitive value of the fundamental tasks of natural sciences does not depend on ascertaining the intersubjective similarity of sensations.⁴⁰ She notes at the same time that this view can be found in various versions of conventionalism (e.g. in Popper's *Logik der Forschung*, Poincaré's *Value of Science*). Conventionalist solutions point out, among others, that objectivity, understood here as communicability, should be linked not to qualities but to their relations, structural properties of things. Though each subject has its "own", (perhaps) unique sensation contents, the relations between these contents can be described linguistically and communicated to others.

by the author in the 1930s. They included: *Prawa fizyki wobec postulatów prawdziwości twierdzeń naukowych* [*The Laws of Physics and the Postulate of the Truth of Scientific Statements*], [in:] *Księga Pamiątkowa PTF we Lwowie, 12 II 1904–12 II 1929* (Lwów 1931), pp. 183–198; *O prawach w nauce* [*On Laws in Science*] (Lwów 1933), p. 65; 'Irracjonalizm a poznanie naukowe' ['Irrationalism and Scientific Cognition'], *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, 14 (1937–1938), pp. 83–118, 185–212; 'Konwencjonalizm a relatywizm' ['Conventionalism and Relativism'], *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, 15 (1938), pp. 328–337; 'O sceptycyzmie i o niektórych sposobach przezwyciężenia go' ['On Scepticism and on Some Methods of Overcoming It'], *Przegląd Współczesny*, 18 (1939), pp. 96–105.

³⁸ To be more precise, Gorgias' argument with a modified follow-up: we can never know whether other people experience the same or similar meaning contents, when they utter the same sentences as we do (I. Dąmbska, *Czy intersubiektywne podobieństwo...*, p. 288). In this form the argument could just as easily be attributed to Fleck.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 288–289.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 291.

The author's argumentation in this matter is brief, but there is no doubt that she regards all conventionalist solutions as insufficiently consolidating the intersubjectivity of empirical statements. They do not provide a satisfying resolution to the sceptic's argument quoted at the beginning. Dąbska, therefore, strengthens this position, saying that "[...] generally, people who are normal in the given conditions of perception are willing to recognise the same statements".⁴¹ This effect is determined by a regulator of sorts which the non-human world of Nature provides for our organisms: "Where people deal with empirical material, freedom to act is limited on pain of nature's sanctions. Freedom to act ceases as does freedom to judge".⁴²

Dąbska regards Fleck's position as being irreconcilable with this view. She recalls his argument that only people using the same thought style can communicate. Members of two collectives using different thought styles attach different meanings to words which at the same time are to be found in languages used in both styles. Strictly speaking, there is no possibility for representatives of two different collectives to communicate. The author's counter-argument suggests the existence of one universal "style of thinking" which is the basis of communication between representatives of different groups: "The most inspired prophet, poet or mystic in some life situations finds a common language with the clear-headed naturalist and belongs to the same style with him. In what situations? In those in which they are not asleep and must seriously take life conditions into account. This shared human thought style is a style in which humans resort to observation judgements".⁴³

Fleck's reply is more extensive than the remarks addressed to him and contains criticism of all important points of Dąbska's position. He questions:

(i) Dąbska's perspective emphasising the significance of observation statements, their role ("applicability") in the knowledge system. In empirical sciences they do not play any fundamental role, for the more deeply we analyse them, the more observation content in the adopted meaning "shrinks" and "disperses". According to Fleck, observation statements, on which the Dąbska focuses, are, in fact "[...] non-deliberate fiction, because we cannot utter a statement that would contain only observation data".⁴⁴ Such statements could be included in analyses, if they were not treated "[...] in complete separation from how and by whom they are arrived at".⁴⁵

(ii) Izydora Dąbska's concept of the observer, "normal people at large", as well as the way the observer functions. Fleck claims that this type of construct is a chimera, anachronistic school fiction. The very term "normal people" is vague

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 292.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 293. In this part of her reflections Dąbska points to the biological concept of cognition developed by W. Witwicki and makes it clear that this is not a manifestation of an acceptance of the position of the pragmatists claiming that the truth of the basic empirical statements is determined by their usefulness (*ibidem*, p. 294).

⁴³ I. Dąbska, *Czy intersubiektywne podobieństwo...*, p. 293.

⁴⁴ L. Fleck, 'W sprawie artykułu P. Izydory Dąbskiej...', p. 193.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

and useless.⁴⁶ Moreover, he questions Dąmbska's view, quoted earlier, that "[...] generally, people who are normal in the given conditions of perception are willing to recognise the same statements". Counterexamples to this arguments are complemented by Fleck by an explanation of conditions that must be met, if we are to be convinced that a similar observation has occurred: "[...] people need to undergo special training or very artificial, laboratory conditions of perception need to be created".⁴⁷ The first possibility means creation of a community with a specific thought style (which Dąmbska criticised, when she analysed Fleck's concept); in the case of the second, too "[...] we cannot talk of the authorship of statements or full responsibility for their recognition by individuals undergoing the test: we are dragging them along the track we have set; no wonder then that they all follow the same line".⁴⁸ According to Fleck, it is our specific questions that force similar answers.

(iii) The idea of grounding the objectivity of cognition in a biological mechanism. This line of argument is ineffective, for, as Fleck claims, there is no independent authority that would allow us to impartially assess competing knowledge systems, the way they deal with the world, to establish what biological benefit they bring to those who use them: "[...] regress to applicability as a biological test of some cognition is ostensible, because ascertaining the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an action (resulting from this cognition) is also a cognitive act".⁴⁹

In concluding his reply to Dąmbska's remarks, Fleck refers directly to the question of truth. (It is, I think, first of all a reaction to the her words that "[...] Dr Fleck seems to be wrong in his recently formulated view [...] that [...] no style can be singled out by the theory of cognition as one that unlike others leads to the truth rather than falsehood or incomprehensible delusions"⁵⁰). The author of *Genesis and Development...* briefly comments on two aspects of this issue.

First, he rejects the possibility of interpreting his position as an example of "relativising the truth".⁵¹ The context allows us to assume that Fleck rejects the above mentioned concept of "relative truths", which is a synonym of one of the meanings of relativism. He points out that the same term has different meanings in statements uttered in different experimental conditions (historical contexts) and, consequently, we are dealing with statements with different contents⁵². Conse-

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 192. Fleck gives varied, contrasting examples, intending to show the fictitiousness of this type of concepts.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 194. The fragment I have quoted is illustrated with the following examples: "all superstitions, old wives' tales, all knowledge of past centuries, e.g. astrology and alchemy, all medieval medicine, and, finally, the knowledge of primitive peoples that seems fantastical to us – all these views have their own "evidence" resulting from predictions coming true or disappointments explained, just like our natural sciences. All seem applicable to their believers – otherwise, who would believe in them?" (*ibidem*).

⁵⁰ I. Dąmbska, *Czy intersubiektywne podobieństwo...*, p. 293.

⁵¹ "This is not sophistry or relativised truth" (*cf.* L. Fleck, 'W sprawie artykułu P. Izydory Dąmbskiej...', p. 195).

⁵² The grounds for such an interpretation can be found in the following fragment of the polemic: "I don't claim that alchemical gold was real gold in our meaning of the term. I claim that al-

quently, his position on this matter is similar to that of Twardowski, who criticised relativists.

Second, he focuses on the question about the “truth”, accuracy of his own stance – he wonders whether his approach to epistemological issues is indeed “wrong” as Dąmbska sees it? It is thus a “metamethodological” problem. Fleck’s reply resembles in this fragment a typical argumentation of a defender of the realist interpretation of the scientific theory in the realism-instrumentalism dispute. The author points out that his theory of styles makes it possible to study and explain questions from the history of scientific cognition, with regard to which other, “traditional” approaches are helpless. Where competitors “laugh helplessly” or, in another case, “stand helplessly in admiration”, Fleck’s sociology of knowledge is to provide a description of the mechanisms of knowledge. The text of the reply ends with a characteristic declaration: “*The theory of thought style frees us from many outdated superstitions and reveals huge areas worthy of investigating. In this sense, that is for its liberating and heuristic role, I believe it is true*”.⁵³

Comments on the polemic between Izydora Dąmbska and Ludwik Fleck usually do not take into account the aspects indicated here. It is referred to in a generalised manner as an early example of dispute over epistemological relativism, which in its mature form emerged a quarter of a century later, when it accompanied T. Kuhn’s and P. Feyerabend’s statements. From this point of view, Fleck may, of course, be regarded as a relativist, while Dąmbska – an anti-relativist (fundamentalist). The position of the author of *Genesis and Development...* is in this respect radical in the sense that his concept of thought styles was not limited only to scientific communities. It took into account various collectives: from those associated with different academic disciplines, through those associated with crafts, to religious or political collectives.

Such qualifications of Fleck’s position often include incorrect explanations of his concept of truth (including the truth of scientific cognition theses). A typical, distorting comment claims that “[...] the notion of truth in the classical sense loses its significance in Fleck’s reflections”.⁵⁴ This is especially strange, given the fact that Fleck’s writings give no grounds for such interpretations. His declarations are unequivocal: the truth of a judgement is ascertained within a specific thought style and this means the conformity of what the judgement in question states with the state of things, the facts. Although a thought style models, co-defines the shape of what a scholar will regard as “empirical reality”, this observation does not denote agreeing that truth is relative. As Fleck writes, “Truth is not »relative« and certainly not »subjective« in the popular sense of the word. [...]”

chemists understood gold, elements of the matter in general, differently from us”, *ibidem*. In another article, which I. Dąmbska knew, he wrote that “each formulated thought, which is destined for real use, bears the sign of the producing unit and address of destination. [...] an abstract sentence, without the sign of the producing unit and without the destination and circulation, is incomplete and does not suit the purpose of the considerations of rational epistemology” (*Zagadnienie teorii poznawania; cf. Cognition and Fact...*, p. 85).

⁵³ *Ibidem* (italicised by Fleck).

⁵⁴ Z. Cackowski, ‘Epistemologia Ludwika Flecka’ [‘Ludwik Fleck’s Epistemology’], *Studia Filozoficzne*, 5–6 [198–199] (1982), p. 67.

One can never say that the same thought is true for A and false for B. If A and B belong to the same thought collective, the thought will be either true or false for both. But if they belong to different thought collectives, it will just *not be the same thought*. It must either be unclear to, or be understood differently by one of them. Truth is not a convention, but rather (1) in historical perspective, an event in the history of thought, (2) in its contemporary context, stylized thought constraint”.⁵⁵ Perhaps the fact that Fleck persistently emphasises the necessity of remembering the historical circumstances in which our diagnosis of whether analysed statements were true (or false) took place – which is referred to at the end of the reflection quoted above – makes it difficult for many readers to notice that he uses the notion of truth in a classical way.

A natural question arises whether Dąbbska’s critical remarks addressed to Fleck might not be addressed also to Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, an advocate of radical conventionalism? Although Fleck’s position is not customarily associated with Ajdukiewicz’s concept (primarily because the nature of analyses conducted by both authors is different), yet the “ultimate meaning” of their concepts in the perspective of the Dąbbska-Fleck polemic is similar. Consequently, the answer to the initial question should be in the affirmative: Dąbbska’s criticism may also be referred to the author of *Obraz świata i aparatura pojęciowa*. However, this is not the place for a detailed explanation of this observation. I would only like to note that although the highlighted differences in the nature of analyses of cognition (scientific knowledge) presented by Ajdukiewicz and Fleck are a fact, the recognition of their existence does not lead to a negation of a number of significant conclusions of the opponent’s position.⁵⁶ These differences are usually treated in the philosophy of science as indicators of radically different metamethodological orientations, which in research practice lead to incomparable pictures of science. Without disregarding them, I would only like to note that the presence of these differences in Fleck’s and Ajdukiewicz’s works does not prevent us from acknowledging that the two scholars followed different paths to arrive at similar conclusions. Generally speaking, we can see them, for example, as supporters of the thesis of incommensurability of scientific theories and – more broadly – one of the variants of constructivism and relativism.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ L. Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago 1981), p. 100.

⁵⁶ For example: The primacy of “synchronous” analysis in the presentation of the position of radical conventionalism does not exclude the diachronic approach preferred by Fleck. They can be considered to be complementing each other. Similarly, Ajdukiewicz’s use of simple logical tools, which made his presentation “technical”, precise (in the eyes of a typical reader), does not disqualifies the use of a free, “essay-like” form of narrative to describe the mechanisms of cognition, a form adopted by Fleck (and vice versa). What can also be regarded as complementary are approaches whereby one author tries to idealise, construct a model of cognitive practice in developed empirical sciences (Ajdukiewicz), while the other describes its mechanisms, giving many historical details and examples from his own research practice. (Strictly speaking, Ajdukiewicz’s concept was a kind of intellectual game using the directive concept of meaning and prediction of the evolution of the languages of natural sciences.).

⁵⁷ For remarks about Fleck cf. W. Sady, *Spór o racjonalność naukową. Od Poincarégo do Laudana* [A Dispute about Scientific Rationality. From Poincaré to Laudan] (Wrocław 2000).

Forerunners and epigones

Comments on Fleck's and Ajdukiewicz's reflections referred to here repeatedly include the question about the similarity of their concepts to the famous positions represented by English-speaking authors and treated as models. Scholars discuss, first of all, the similarities to T.S. Kuhn's analyses of the mechanisms of scientific cognition (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962) and W.V. Quine's conventionalism (first of all in its version from the 1951 the article *Two dogmas of empiricism*). Sometimes after establishing that there are similarities in diagnoses included in works of, say, the forgotten Fleck and the famous Kuhn, they express their hope that philosophers will review their opinions and will be more just in their assessment of the achievements of both authors. Such an attitude is, in my opinion, natural and proper⁵⁸, provided that it stays as close as possible to what J. Woleński expressed in his studies of analytical philosophy, including the Lvov-Warsaw School: "In philosophical matters, it is important who wrote what and when".⁵⁹ When a scholar is casual in his treatment of *what* the compared authors claim, the efforts to give the earlier work its due lead to another simplification and eventually turn into an inept attempt to defend "one's own".

In the case of a description of the "thought style concept" – "paradigm concept" relation, it is especially easy to give way to stereotypes, given Kuhn's declaration pointing to *Genesis and Development of Scientific Fact* as one of the sources of his position. As a result, we have to deal with statements like "Fleck is a kind of early Kuhn", and in a more brutal version simple formulas along the lines of "Kuhn copied his concept of the development of science from Fleck". These opinions generally treat both concepts as identical, as presenting the same model of scientific knowledge. They are accompanied by an obvious intention of indirectly enhancing Fleck's stature.⁶⁰ This is not, I think, the best way to give his ideas appropriate recognition. It loses sight⁶¹ of the unique nature of the Lvov doctor's concept, which, in my opinion, can be regarded as original and inspiring, also when we bear in mind that today's market of ideas includes Kuhn's proposal as well. Fleck's solutions may for many readers compete with those from *The Structure...* The above mentioned simple formulas give Fleck an advantage of time (which I would not dismiss!). I would like to stress that several decades before Kuhn the Polish author proposed – within the tradition of the sociology of knowledge – a mature and at the same time ground-breaking model of scientific development, a model

⁵⁸ If only because it gives us a more precise picture of the evolution of ideas in Western thought and revises the far too simplified history of philosophy. In the social dimension, it is also an expression of self-defence of those philosophical circles that use "local", lesser known languages.

⁵⁹ J. Woleński, *Epistemologia [Epistemology]* (Warszawa 2005), p. 10. A view expressed in a work drawing to a large extent on the results of representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School.

⁶⁰ Finding a similarity between Fleck's and Kuhn's concepts is not always an opportunity to express satisfaction. According to Jerzy Perzanowski, Fleck, who otherwise made a number of interesting observations, nevertheless began a period of decline of this branch of modern philosophy of science, which emphasises the sociological entanglement of science. Professor Dąmbaska deserves the credit also because she was the first to have noticed the threat and began to fight it (cf. *Izydora Dąmbaska, 1904–1983*, p. 86).

⁶¹ It does not take it into account, because it does not notice it?

that was not “just” revived in Kuhn’s later work. The treatment of Fleck’s thought suggested here stems from a pragmatic view that attempts to change the public perception of Thomas Kuhn as the *founding father* of the historical-sociological movement in philosophy of science are examples of hopeless cases. The starting point is, as I have mentioned, the conviction that we are dealing with two models of knowledge that differ in significant respects. Obviously, this is not the place for detailed arguments supporting this view. Perhaps it will be enough to indicate that in addition to similarities in epistemological assumptions and a number of detailed diagnoses⁶², there are profound differences as well. For instance, in Fleck’s works we will not find structures that play the role of paradigms, i.e. extraordinarily stable over time, practically unquestionable theories with their ways of application within the so-called normal science (institutional science). On the contrary, in Fleck’s model “everything flows”, knowledge systems do not maintain a “stable form” but are continuously transformed. Researchers themselves can be (and often are) eternal revolutionaries, unlike Kuhn’s typical researcher, representing normal science, who is a born conservative.

I will finish this digression about the mechanisms of reception of one of the results of Polish philosophy by indicating the similar fate, in some respects, of Ajdukiewicz’s conventionalism referred to earlier. From the perspective taking this concept into account, it would be difficult to say that e.g. Quine’s conventionalism presented in the collection *From a Logical Point of View* is highly original. I believe that from this perspective we can strengthen the view of H. Jakubiec and J. Woleński, who in conclusion of an article comparing selected concepts of Quine and Ajdukiewicz (including conventionalism) state that “[...] Ajdukiewicz’s and Quine’s views were shaped totally independently, though Ajdukiewicz was the first to express them, which is understandable, as he had been born 15 years earlier”.⁶³ I believe it is highly likely that Quine was directly inspired by Ajdukiewicz in late autumn 1933 (during a six-week visit to Warsaw of the author of *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* during his stay in Europe on a scholarship).⁶⁴ It also seems almost certain, given his lasting interest in the results obtained by the Viennese, that Quine read the 1934 edition of *Erkenntnis* containing articles presenting radical

⁶² The more important among them include the acknowledgement of the significance of historical perspective in the explanation of the phenomenon of science, the rejection of cumulativism, the adoption of the sociological perspective in analyses of the mechanisms of the creation and transformation of knowledge, the emphasis on the role of educational training in shaping members of the scientific community.

⁶³ H. Jakubiec, J. Woleński, ‘Ajdukiewicz i Quine’, *Zagadnienia Naukoznawstwa*, 3 [75] (1983), p. 320.

⁶⁴ In Quine’s autobiographical works from the mid 1980s we can find testimonies to the importance of his contacts with Polish logicians and philosophers. Quine says, for example, that his five-month stay in Vienna, improving his German, and prepared him for what turned out to be intellectually the most fruitful months he experienced (i.e., six weeks in Prague and six weeks in Warsaw) [cf. L.E. Hahn, P.A. Schilpp (eds.), *The Philosophy of W.V. Quine* (La Salle 1988), p. 12]. In Prague Quine was taught by R. Carnap, while in Warsaw his teachers were, first of all, the logicians Tarski, Leśniewski and Łukasiewicz. He also met Ajdukiewicz, Kotarbiński, Kuratowski, Sobociński and Jaśkowski. Cf. also W.V. Quine, *The Time of My Life. An Autobiography* (Cambridge 2000), p. 104.

conventionalism. Incidentally, a more glaring case of an idea repeated by Quine and introduced earlier by another author (a friend of his, I would like to add) is Carnap's approach to the mechanism of eliminating the conflict between knowledge (theory) and experience. A dozen or so years before the publication of *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* R. Carnap presents⁶⁵ a highly precise exposition of an issue that began in Duhem's and Milhaud's conventionalism and was later called the Duhem-Quine thesis. If we limit our comparison of Carnap's and Quine's texts to an analysis of the thread associated with Duhem's position⁶⁶ it will be difficult to point out any differences – with the exception of the language, which is freer in *Two Dogmas* – between the positions of the two authors. The similarity of ideas is so great that it would not be an overstatement to say that Quine's fragment is only a stylistically touched up excerpt from Carnap's *Logical Syntax of Language*.⁶⁷ However, these circumstances go unnoticed by the public and Quine himself is commonly regarded as a Columbus who discovered this problem.

Fleck the outlaw

Izydora Dąmbska did not respond publicly to Fleck's reply. She did not continue the polemic in the following years. She did not mention the name of her adversary in her later works, which – it would seem – provided a natural opportunity for a discussion of or at least a brief reference to Fleck's position.⁶⁸ It would be difficult, in my opinion, to provide well-grounded hypotheses explaining this state of affairs. I do not think that the simplest explanation would suffice – that Fleck convinced her with his slightly ironic reply and Dąmbska concluded that her accusations were refuted.⁶⁹ Thus, we can only speculate. With the growing interest in the author of *Genesis and Development...*, there have been quite a few speculations over the last thirty years. These hypotheses have had a broader ob-

⁶⁵ R. Carnap *Logische Syntax der Sprache* (Wien 1934).

⁶⁶ While being in Prague Quine attended Carnap's lectures and read *Logische Syntax der Sprache* as the text was coming out of Ina Carnap's typewriter (cf. *The Philosophy of W.V. Quine*, p. 12).

⁶⁷ Cf. R. Carnap, *The Logical Syntax of Language*, §82 and W.V. Quine, *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, first fragment of §6.

⁶⁸ Among the larger works published in the 1960s and 1970s (some of them after the publication of the Polish translation of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which mentions Fleck) I would point to *Dwa studia z teorii naukowego poznania* [*Two Studies from the Theory of Scientific Cognition*] (Toruń 1962), *O narzędziach i przedmiotach poznania* [*On the Tools and Objects of Cognition*] (Warszawa 1967), *Znaki i myśli* [*Signs and Thoughts*] (Warszawa-Poznań-Toruń 1975), *O konwencjach i konwencjonalizmie* [*On Conventions and Conventionalism*] (Wrocław 1975). Another, very characteristic example of "forgetting" Fleck is a Dąmbska's post-war article 'Czterdzieści lat filozofii we Lwowie, 1898–1948' ['Forty Years of Philosophy in Lvov, 1898–1948'], *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 44 (1948), pp. 14–25, in which she fails to mention Fleck, although she does mention people who did not specialise in philosophy, did not hold any academic posts and did not have achievements comparable to those of Fleck. Similarly, K. Ajdukiewicz's overview *Kierunki i prądy filozofii współczesnej*, an article from 1937, does not mention Fleck either. There is also a fragment devoted to an orientation which could be attributed to him – historicism.

⁶⁹ There is not even a weak confirmation of such an explanation in Dąmbska's writings published immediately after the polemic with Fleck and referring to the problems tackled in the dispute.

jective: to explain not only I. Dąmbska's case but also that of her own circle – the silence of Twardowski's school vis-à-vis Fleck's oeuvre.⁷⁰

Particularly influential has been B. Wolniewicz's attempt to rationalise Fleck's absence⁷¹. Wolniewicz has suggested two complementary explanations of this situation.

Explanation I, referring to socio-political circumstances: "The spirit of the Lvov-Warsaw School was thoroughly liberal. [...] The liberal-rationalist belief in the fundamental and universal possibility of communication between people is questioned by Fleck. [...] Thus, the fact that Fleck was ignored could be explained as a case of socio-psychological denial of an ideological content threatening the stability of one's own system of views".⁷²

This hypothesis fails to convince for two reasons. Wolniewicz does not take into consideration Fleck's characteristic declarations that encourage us to see in his work the "faith" similar to the one he attributes to Twardowski's followers. His theory of thought styles is to be a panacea making communication between people possible. Here is an example from Fleck's creed that comes from the polemic with Dąmbska: "One cannot examine views in isolation from the totality of culture of a society in a given period. The starting point must be a collective of people living together, and this method leads first of all to the sociology of thinking, which, capable of being a comparative science, encompasses the most general approaches. In the period we are approaching, a period of synthesis and disappearance of particularisms, it will be unavoidable. Specialisation and diversity within society are growing and will continue to grow. There is no way that attempts at brutal uniformisation of humanity will have a lasting effect. Communication is possible only on the basis of results of the comparative method: Only in this way can a shared thought collective emerge, free through criticism, general through tolerance".⁷³

Another critical observation is associated with Wolniewicz's inconsistency in his argumentation. He precedes Explanation I with a comment on a natural hypothesis that the reason why Fleck was ignored was his relativism. The author believes this hypothesis is insufficient. In his opinion, this motive could not have been important given the fact that a version of relativism was at that time advocated by K. Ajdukiewicz, an important representative of the School. So if, according to Wolniewicz, those associated with the School tolerated a radical conventionalism thesis that researchers using two different world perspectives could not communicate, then he cannot suggest at the time an explanation the essence

⁷⁰ Let me note here that shortly before WWII Fleck started a polemic with another physician interested in the theory of science, Tadeusz Bilikiewicz. Some statements were reprinted in a supplement to the Polish edition of *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*; cf. also S. Symotiuk, 'Dwie socjologie wiedzy. Polemika Flecka z Bilikiewiczem' ['Two Sociologies of Knowledge. Fleck's Polemic with Bilikiewicz'], *Studia Filozoficzne*, 10 [215] (1983), pp. 129–143.

⁷¹ B. Wolniewicz, 'Ludwik Fleck i filozofia polska' ['Ludwik Fleck and Polish Philosophy'], *Studia Filozoficzne*, 5–6 [198–199] (1982).

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 80.

⁷³ L. Fleck, 'W sprawie artykułu P. Izydory Dąmbskiej...', p. 195.

of which is the recognition of the living presence of faith indicated in the quoted fragment⁷⁴ in this circle.

Explanation II, indicating, according to Wolniewicz, the main reason why Fleck was disregarded, says that “the methodological standard of what was deemed [in the Lvov-Warsaw School – K. S.] worthy of discussion in the theory of cognition was extremely high. [...] Fleck’s writings were unable to meet the standards of logical clarity, which Polish philosophy at the time proposed and defended. In this respect his ideas were simply not mature enough theoretically”.⁷⁵

I find this view hard to defend. In order to avoid all possible misunderstandings, we should note at the beginning that within Twardowski’s school there was a very substantial tolerance for research topics tackled and for scholars’ philosophical orientations.⁷⁶ Therefore, Fleck’s original interests – epistemology with a strong component of a historically oriented sociology of knowledge – could not have been the reason why he was deliberately excluded from the Lvov philosophical community. The key question is thus an assessment of this “methodological standard” of his philosophical writings. I would like to juxtapose Bogusław Wolniewicz’s critical opinion with a view that if we take into account the type of issues analysed, Fleck’s works did not contrast negatively with works by established authors associated with the School. They contained a vividly stated problem, clearly formulated theses of the author’s positive stance, extended argumentation supporting them, sometimes very rich historical material illustrating his reasoning. All this was presented in the spirit of “critical rationalism” and not, for example, Husserl’s phenomenology or Bergson’s intuitionism (i.e. traditions from which members of the School clearly distanced themselves). Fleck felt, of course, that his research and results were something new, but he wanted to demonstrate this novelty by showing respect in his argumentation to classical logic and presenting his readiness to resolve the dispute by referring to empirical facts.

So what could this “theoretical immaturity” of Fleck’s position mentioned by Wolniewicz mean? I am unable to answer this question. On the contrary, given the stage of development of the sociology of knowledge at the time, I would be willing to call Fleck’s works, primarily *Genesis and Development...*, surprisingly “theoretically mature”. If we also bear in mind that they were written by an author who was an amateur philosopher and wrote them in his spare time, they could be called extraordinary, unique. This opinion is confirmed by the fact that they have stood the test of time. Decades after they were written, they are seen not only as

⁷⁴ B. Wolniewicz, *Ludwik Fleck...*, pp. 79–80. (Cf. also the author’s statement: “The world is not a Tower of Babel: we can always eventually communicate and sort things out”; *ibidem*).

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 81.

⁷⁶ Here is Dąmbska’s characteristic, retrospective opinion about the School: “The Lvov philosophers [members of Twardowski’s school – K.S.] [...] did not share any single doctrine, any uniform worldview. What constituted the basis of the spiritual community of these people was not the content of science, but the way, the method of philosophising and a common scientific language. That is why the school could produce spiritualists and materialists, nominalists and realists, logicians and psychologists, philosophers of nature and theorists of art (cf. I. Dąmbska, *Czterdzieści lat filozofii we Lwowie, 1898–1948*, p. 17). This view is featured in monographs devoted to the School.

documents from the history of thought. On the other hand, Fleck's treatises, like any other works describing aspects of the real world, cannot obviously be regarded as complete works. Works that can no longer be made more precise, be corrected under the influence of criticism. However, I do not suspect that in this last respect Wolniewicz, who criticised Fleck, would have had a different opinion.

When it comes to the language, I would find Fleck's texts attractive as literature,⁷⁷ marked as they are by passion, sometimes also irony. The composition of *Genesis and Development...* remains an open question. I understand those who criticise it, suggest a change in the order of the threads to achieve a more systematic, "school-type" of argumentation. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to argue that in their present form Fleck's theses are "obscure".

B. Wolniewicz's criticism, included in the argumentation marked here as "Explanation II", is complemented by an example illustrating the presence of logical errors in Fleck's book (i.e. "failure to observe the standards of logic"). I would like to conclude by saying that this author's detailed argumentation is based on a questionable interpretation of one the expressions from *Entstehung und Entwicklung...* Its rejection neutralises the statement that this fragment of Fleck's work is illogical.

⁷⁷ My opinion is based on Fleck's works written in Polish and on the Polish translation of *Entstehung und Entwicklung...* It must be noted that there are quite a few voices that the German language makes Fleck's book difficult to read (*cf.* e.g. Kuhn's and Merton's works quoted here). Perhaps the author is justified to some extent by the fact that he was looking for new terms to express his novel ideas.

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Constructivism and Realism on the Status of Scientific Facts. Bruno Latour versus Ian Hacking*

Abstract

The paper addresses one of most important topics in contemporary epistemology, i.e. the controversy between realistic vs. constructivist approach to reality and science. In my article I focus on two representatives of these approaches, on Ian Hacking's realistic view of knowledge, and on Bruno Latour's radical constructivism. In the first part, Latour's idea of anthropological research of the method of sciences is discussed. I argue that Latour's conception boils down to an assertion against there being an universal method of science. In second part I discuss realistic standpoint of Ian Hacking and his view that not all scientific facts are theoretical constructions.

The dispute between constructivism and realism on what constitutes facts has been around essentially since the time of Kant. Despite not being new, however, the topic is worth revisiting – if not for other reasons, then at least to examine arguments brought forward by both sides of the age-long dispute.

Constructivism is far from being a uniform approach. Theoreticians who think of themselves as constructivists fail to present a concise and precisely defined set of ideas. Their theoretical framework is multidimensional, comprising elements which can be analyzed in a variety of interpretations. The status of realism is equally, if not more, complex. Realism has a multitude of different variants. Some of them, including the internal realist approach first developed by Hilary Putnam or non-representative realism proposed by Alan Chalmers, depart markedly from “classical” realism and tend to adopt tenets which are also traditionally considered as opposing the realist paradigm.¹ Throughout the discussion below, constructivism shall be understood as referring primarily to the views put forth by Bruno Latour, summarized as the *actor-network theory (ANT)*, while realism

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¹ For a more detailed discussion of different varieties of constructivism and realism go to: M. Sikora, ‘Problem reprezentacji na tle sporu realistów z konstruktywistami’, *Zagadnienia Naukoznawstwa*, 3–4 [165–166] (2006), pp. 379–398.

is identified with a series of works written by Ian Hacking in the defence of realism about theoretical entities (*entity realism*).

1. Latour's constructivism

Latour made the first attempt at setting out his views on constructivism in the book he co-authored with Steve Woolgar, entitled *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*. Opinions presented in the study are based on anthropological studies undertaken to investigate the process of construction of scientific facts in contemporary scientific laboratories.² On the one hand, the authors assume that laboratory studies involve an external reality, or something external to researchers. On the other, they argue that the “out-there-ness” is not, contrary to what is commonly assumed, the *cause* of research but rather its *consequence*, while an important factor in fact construction is *timing*.³ An analysis of controversies considered in the laboratory setting leads to the conclusion that: “once the controversy has settled, reality is taken to be the cause of this settlement; but while controversy is still raging, reality is the consequence of debate, following each twist and turn in the controversy as if it were the shadow of scientific endeavour”.⁴

By “deconstructing laboratory experiments”, Latour and Woolgar seek to demonstrate relationships existing between the social and material worlds. The interactions, Latour and Woolgar point out, are mutual in that the former affects the latter, and *vice versa*. They argue that when experimental work is initiated to study a given material substance, the substance is analyzed by experimenters as a malleable social construct. However, as soon as the study process is complete, the very same substance is regarded by the same researchers as a scientific fact, i.e. an entity of nature. In the former case, researchers act as constructivists, in the latter – as realists. Latour and Woolgar fully intentionally refrain from outlining a definite mechanism governing mutual penetration of the social and material worlds. They argue that scientific facts are not of a permanent character. Instead, they arise in the process of negotiations and are built on a mutual consensus. Furthermore, facts are determined to a significant extent by the material apparatus used in the process of fact construction to transform different substances into an array of charts, diagrams etc. – so-called *inscriptions*. As it is, scientific facts are defined with reference to circumstances

² The studies were Latour's idea. For nearly two years he participated as an observer in studies conducted in one of neurophysiology laboratories. Later he used material gathered during this period to write, in collaboration with Woolgar, a detailed insider's account of scientific procedures applied in the laboratory under study.

³ B. Latour, S. Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (London–Beverly Hills 1979), p. 171. Latour and Woolgar emphasize the etymology of the word “fact”, stating that it comes from the Latin noun *factum* derived from the past participle of *facere*, meaning “to do”, or “to make”. Facts, as the two authors claim, are made. Since that what is made exists, one cannot argue that facts do not exist – or that there is no such thing as reality.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

existing in the social space of the laboratory, and factors which take the form of the laboratory's material equipment.⁵

The approach proposed by Latour and Woolgar is frequently referred to as "social constructivism". It should be stressed, though, that the nature of facts constructed within the realm of science is not affected solely by the social context.⁶ Admittedly, *Laboratory Life* discusses the process of creation of the material world, however not in the sense of laboratory-based or industrial manipulations which – as in the works of Karin Knorr-Cetina⁷ – have their source in the domain of the world experienced through daily interaction. Even though researchers working in laboratories literally produce artefacts which acquire the status of scientific facts, the process in Latour and Woolgar's framework is less intentional than in Knorr-Cetina's works. In the former case, as aptly pointed out by Sergio Sismondo, creation of the material world acquires a neo-Kantian sense.⁸ If this interpretation of constructivism is to be adopted, science brings the world into existence not only because of the powerful influence exerted by social factors but also because of the need to take into account and absorb a range of different theoretical constructs related to the material environment of the laboratory.

Following his collaboration with Woolgar, Latour delved into his anthropological studies of the laboratory even more deeply, documenting them in a long list of works. In all of his studies Latour consistently strives to blur the boundaries between the human world of culture and the non-human world of nature. The culmination of his works is the *actor-network theory*⁹ with which the French scholar attempts to account for science in operation,¹⁰ i.e. describe the actual practice of science in the laboratory. The key means of description is the metaphor of making and breaking associations between human and nonhuman actors,¹¹ i.e. all the constituents of the practice. The fact that actors are referred to as human and non-human does not mean that they are in principle assigned different properties. The pair is not to be understood as an extension of the subject-object

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

⁶ The subtitle of the second (revised) edition of *Laboratory Life* was changed. *The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* was replaced by *The Construction of Scientific Facts*, which is a clear indication that the construction of scientific facts may not be limited solely to the social domain. Cf. B. Latour, S. Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton 1986).

⁷ For a discussion of fundamental assumptions of Knorr-Cetina's social constructivism go to M. Sikora, *Wiedza nauk laboratoryjnych*, [in:] P. Madejski, M. Sikora (red.), *Rodzaje wiedzy o świecie* (Wrocław 1999), pp. 73–78.

⁸ Cf. S. Sismondo, *Science without Myth On Constructions, Reality, and Social Knowledge* (New York 1996), p. 69. The discussion is about the neo-Kantian sense in which the aspect concerning "the world of things in themselves" is disregarded.

⁹ A more detailed discussion of the topic (in Polish) is found in E. Bińczyk, *Nowe oblicza referencjalności w świetle wybranych koncepcji filozoficznych*, PhD thesis (Toruń 2004), pp. 200–262.

¹⁰ See B. Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientist and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge 1987).

¹¹ Cf. A. Pickering, *From Science as Knowledge to Science as Practice*, [in:] A. Pickering (ed.), *Science as Practice and Culture* (Chicago 1992), p. 19.

dichotomy, with Latour deliberately ignoring the dualism¹². The subject and object are referred to by the scholar as *polemical entities*. They must not, Latour claims, be regarded as “innocent metaphysical inhabitants of the world”.¹³ There is no outside world existing independently of the social world, i.e. there is no ahistoric, non-human autonomous world dissociated from human existence.¹⁴

The actor-network theory is largely a consequence of criticism levelled by Latour against the modernist perspective of culture and nature.¹⁵ The main objections formulated in *We Never Have Been Modern* concern the fact that modernism on the one hand postulated two sets of completely dissimilar practices and, on the other hand, presents no actual points of distinction between these practices, which results in mixing. One set, obtained by the practice of “translation” (mediation), comprises hybrids (quasi-objects), or amalgamations of nature and culture. The other set arises due to practices of purification, and produces two separate and distinct ontological domains, namely that of human beings and that of non-humans. As long as the two sets of practices are treated separately, Latour argues, we are “modern”. However, when the work of purification and the work of hybridization are analyzed simultaneously (as mutually penetrating and influencing), our position changes. We cease being modern and become amodern.¹⁶

Upon close observation of laboratory practices followed in the laboratory setting, Latour comes out unambiguously in favour of amodernism. He firmly rejects the asymmetry between what is human (cultural, social) and what is non-human (natural). Unlike naturalist realists, Latour dismisses the view that the domain of nature is primary to social practice. However, he also speaks against the tenets of social realists who take the opposite stance on the issue. What he advocates instead is the generalized symmetry principle which has a potential to free us from the Great Divide, i.e. prove that the natural and social spheres determine each other and create a common space where a varied range of mediatory interconnections between human and nonhuman actors takes place.¹⁷ Facts are recognized as derivatives of these interconnections.

Consequently, facts are neither social constructs, nor neutrally discovered material objects. “It is easy to understand why houses and cars and baskets and mugs

¹² B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope ...*, p. 308.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 294.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

¹⁵ B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge 1993), pp. 10–12, 58, 103–106.

¹⁶ For a broader account of these problems, go to M. Sikora, *Problem interpretacji w metodologii nauk empirycznych* (Poznań 1997), pp. 169–170.

¹⁷ At this point close attention should be paid to the difference between the individualistic and social model of creating scientific knowledge. The issue is discussed at length by Schapin who is a strong supporter of the latter model and underpins it with the category of *trust*. Neither scholars, nor ordinary people in the street, as Schapin points out, experience anything in a self-evident manner: whenever we conduct experiments and then present and evaluate results of our empirical studies of the world, we find ourselves within the bounds of a certain system in which trust has its firm place, being assumed *a priori* in the background of our knowledge. Whenever we experience something, we recognize the thing experienced as an *experience-of-a-certain-sort* solely by virtue of the system of trust which is engaged in the construction of our knowledge base. See S. Schapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago 1994), p. 21.

are at once *f a b r i c a t e d* and *r e a l*".¹⁸ The status of facts is gradable. Latour describes them rather metaphorically as quasi-objects inhabiting what he calls the *M i d d l e K i n g d o m* situated between the society and nature. "Quasi-objects are much more social, much more fabricated, much more collective than the 'hard' parts of nature, but they are in no way the arbitrary receptacles of a full-fledged society. On the other hand they are much more real, non-human and objective than those shapeless screens on which society – for unknown reasons – needed to be 'projected'".¹⁹

To highlight the "fluidity" of the status of facts, Latour refers to original texts authored by Louis Pasteur and probes into accounts of laboratory practice provided by the famous French microbiologist. Based on that example, he demonstrates that the process of emergence and stabilization of what is *r e c o g n i z e d* as a fact is hugely diverse. In *Pandora's Hope* he recounts studies into the fermentation of lactic acid.²⁰ At the outset of research, lactic acid was an essentially unspecified substance. Similarly to other scientists, Pasteur did not know what the substance was, however he knew how it *m i g h t a c t*. What he resolved to do in the circumstances was investigating it as "a name of action". Upon completing a series of experiments he noted that lactic acid was capable of causing fermentation, remaining clear or cloudy, generating gas or forming sediment.²¹ Based on results of these actions, Pasteur derived properties that allowed him to "identify" yeast. Consequently, what was merely a collection of loose observations at the beginning of study was "transformed" into a natural substance as laboratory experiments progressed.

Latour highlights very clearly that experiments involve a considerable set of factors which are beyond the experimenter's control. "But, nothing proves that an experiment is a zero-sum game. On the contrary, every difficulty above suggests that *an experiment is an event*. [...] an event and not a discovery, an uncovering, an imposition, a synthetic *a priori* judgement, the actualization of a potentiality, and so on".²²

In his *Pasteurization of France* Latour focuses on the scale of changes brought about by Pasteur's experiments investigating microorganisms.²³ He argues that the transformation encompassed all the actors participating in the experiments. They changed Pasteur himself – as well as scientific practice in the field of microbiology. Even more importantly, they thoroughly transformed the French society. Latour points to a very close interdependence existing between all the factors present in the laboratory, highlighting particularly strongly the contribution made by Pasteur. He claims that the full extent of Pasteur's genius was not revealed

¹⁸ B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope...*, p. 123 (emphasis as in the original).

¹⁹ B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern ...*, p. 55 (single quotation marks as in the original).

²⁰ See also B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope...*, pp. 113–133.

²¹ At this point Latour places a very clear emphasis on the importance of the pragmatic approach. See also B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope...*, p. 119.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 126.

²³ Throughout his study Latour consistently refers to microorganisms as *microbes*. See B. Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Cambridge 1988).

when the scientist revolutionized biology by identifying the mechanism of microbe attenuation – but rather when Pasteur was able to perform in the laboratory a successful translation into the language of scientific practice of problems which had been enormously important for the society for many years preceding his seminal discovery.²⁴ The event of gaining control over microorganisms shows, Latour argues, the nature of relations between the laboratory and its social environment. On the one hand, the outside environment has a marked influence on the laboratory. On the other, results of laboratory studies acquire practical applications.

Translation practices in Latour's studies are associated with the notion of network. The notion is useful in accounting for the development and stability of scientific knowledge. The network is comprised of works of science, and it is understood as a tangle of correlations arising between the society and nature and forming a background against which the works of science become constituted. It is the network – similarly to Fleck's concept of style of thinking – that brings scientific facts into existence.²⁵ Scientific facts acquire an identity exclusively within the network. There is no such thing, Latour emphasizes, as universal laws of science. Thereby, the universality of Boyle's or Newton's laws cannot be defended in epistemological terms. Their universality will always need to be interpreted in the context of network of research practices adopted in science. One can definitely speak of the universality of laws of science, however every such statement needs a qualification that the universality is realized due to the standardization of research equipment.²⁶ In order to verify the most minor fact or the most trivial law, complex metrological networks, laboratories and tools must be taken into account. Naturally, in the Western thought there may be a belief that universal gravitation is indeed universal even without any instruments, computations or laboratory work. That belief is, however, in its essence similar to the view embraced by members of one of New Guinea's tribes who claim that they make up the entire human race.²⁷ "Nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to anything else. Never by itself, but always through the mediation of another".²⁸

Works of science are thus separated from the stream of multiple factors engaged in the process of mediation. Even though their status is gradable, some are more and others are less verified. The former, among which Latour mentions Pythagoras' theorem or Planck's constant, create a stable and expanding network. The latter arise as a result of dissemination of the former in various beliefs, views, machines or instruments.²⁹ The mechanism underlying network stabilization is dynamic and open, which makes it impossible to predict the course of its development. It involves a wide range of heterogeneous factors relating both to the social

²⁴ See also *ibidem*, pp. 65–67. Cf. M. Zuber, *Wizja działalności uczonych w koncepcji Brunona Latoura*, [in:] *Rodzaje wiedzy o świecie...*, pp. 62–64.

²⁵ Cf. L. Fleck, *Powstanie i rozwój faktu naukowego. Wprowadzenie do nauki o stylu myślowym i kolektywie myślowym*, transl. M. Tuskiewicz (Lublin 1986), pp. 68, 181.

²⁶ B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern...*, p. 24.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 113.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

and natural world.³⁰ There is no way of foreseeing which of them will dominate in the future.

In the *actor-network* theory Latour does not detach ontological and epistemological perspectives. On the one hand, the scholar seeks to demonstrate that the works of science comprise human and non-human actors. On the other, he argues that the works are neither fully constructed nor fully discovered. As it is, there are no ready-made “essences” waiting to be discovered. All the essences are contextual in nature. There is no sense in asking where, for example, microbes were before Pasteur discovered them. Likewise, no one wonders where cars or TV sets were before they were invented.³¹

The author of *We Have Been Never Modern* makes frequent references to Kant in his studies. He tends to be criticized for his clear distinction between the world of things in themselves and the world of things accessible to experience. The criticism, however, somewhat loses its force when it is analyzed from the viewpoint of interpretations of Kant’s philosophical framework proposed by Marek Siemek³² or A.B. Dickerson.³³ Comparing Kant and Latour, it seems significant that both theoreticians perceive objects of scientific research as a result of correlation of the human and real orders. In the French philosopher’s views, however, the correlation is much more expanded. It involves much more elements which, importantly, never have *an a priori* character – as opposed to Kant’s system. The very idea of correlation is similar in Kant’s and Latour’s theories, though. Like Kant, Latour believes that there are assumptions which exclude the mimetic description of objects that are external to the human world. Whereas I interpret Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* differently from Latour, I share the latter’s view when he connects the modernist vision of the world with the philosophical beliefs of Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle, two authors who argued that there was no common space for knowledge and power. The view led to a radical separation of science and politics. Boyle asserted that the former domain represented things, while Hobbes claimed the latter represented people. It must be noted, though, that the word “representation” had a radically different meaning in each of the contexts. Scientific representation refers to the ontological order of the world of things, whereas political representation – to the social order of the world of people.³⁴ Latour’s studies reveal a completely different concept of representation, integrating both of the above-mentioned orders. What emerges as a consequence is an “intermediate order” already mentioned above (“Middle Kingdom”). The quasi-objects accommodated within the “Kingdom” are to be treated as representations of relationships formed between things and people thanks to the practices of mediation. Latour illustrates the “integrative” sense of the concept of repre-

³⁰ Sismondo calls Latour’s proposal “heterogeneous constructivism”. Cf. S. Sismondo, *Science without Myth...*, pp. 70–72, 113–126.

³¹ Cf. B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope...*, pp. 15, 129–135. See E. Bińczyk, *Nowe oblicza referencjalności w świetle wybranych koncepcji filozofii współczesnej...*, p. 224.

³² Cf. M. Siemek, *Transcendentalizm jako stanowisko epistemologiczne*, [in:] M. Siemek, *Filozofia, dialektyka; rzeczywistość* (Warszawa 1982), pp. 58–75.

³³ See A.B. Dickerson, *Kant on Representation and Objectivity* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 29–31.

³⁴ See B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern...*, pp. 27–29.

sentation particularly clearly when he addresses his idea of the *Parliament of Things*, i.e. a space in which processes of ratification of scientific networks occur. Latour's use of the rhetorical figure which juxtaposes the category of "parliament", well rooted in the political tradition, with the category of "things", well established in the natural environment, attests – so it seems – to his questioning of the modernist dogma of the separation of the society from science. Science is committed to social (that is – for all intents and purposes – political) responsibility and, likewise, politics is not unconcerned about what innovations, gained thanks to science, it has at its disposal. "Every transformation of nature – so Latour claims – has to be in harmony with a social transformation, term for term, and vice versa".³⁵ The aim of mutual cooperation between nature and society is to achieve a *concordant community*. The latter, forming a whole, closely binds politics and science in order to search in the space of both human and non-human actors for that which is common, agreed and concordant as opposed to what is separate, opposing and discordant.³⁶ This warrants the claim that reality exists only insofar as it is represented.³⁷

In Latour's framework representation takes a form which, in view of the problem of conditions and possibilities of experience, should be termed *transcendental*.³⁸ This form of representation is to be conceived of as a correlation between what exists and what (how and why) represents that which exists. A key aspect of the correlation is capturing the relations that are at play – referring to Charles S. Peirce's terminology – between the dynamic (real) object and the direct (represented) object.³⁹

A lucid outline of the relationships addressed here is provided by Anna Pałubicka from the perspective of culture theory (rather than anthropology of knowledge or philosophy of science). Pałubicka asserts that subjects seeking to account for objects appearing in their study field have a choice between two different contexts: physicalistic or actional. The former is theoretical and reflexive in nature, while the latter is predominantly pragmatic.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 139.

³⁶ Latour takes a stand which is in alignment with the holistic paradigm represented in contemporary philosophy by D. Bohm, F. Capra, R. Sheldrake, and in Poland by M. Tempczyk, and others. Philosophers representing this paradigm are critical about any attempts to diffuse (as opposed to unifying) processes taking place in the world. In this aspect, it opposes not only the modernist thought but also the postmodernist approach.

³⁷ In this context Latour formulates a motto stating "*no reality without representation*". Cf. B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope...*, p. 304.

³⁸ Kant clarifies that "The word 'transcendental' [...] does not signify something passing beyond all experience, but something that indeed precedes it *a priori*, but that is intended simply to make knowledge of experience possible". See I. Kant, *Prolegomena* (1783), transl. P. Carus (Chicago–La Salle 1996). I have already addressed the difference between Kant and Latour in their approach to the nature of conditions that make experience possible. For the purpose of recapitulation, the former asserted *a priori* conditions and the latter was in favour of their contextual nature.

³⁹ See *Collected Papers by Charles S. Peirce*, A. Burks (ed.), vol. 8 (Cambridge 1958), §183; see also H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *Semiotyka Peirce'a* (Warszawa 1994), pp. 58–59.

⁴⁰ See A. Pałubicka, *Percepcja a kultura nowożytna*, [in:] J. Kmita (red.), *Tropem Nietzscheńskiego kłamstwa słów* (Poznań 1999), pp. 97–126.

Paweł Zeidler uses Pałubicka's claims to demonstrate the complexity involved in the problem of the "reality" status with regard to the objective reference of products obtained in the laboratory. Furthermore, Zeidler draws attention to the neutrality of the dispute about laboratory realism. Pałubicka leaves as an open question the problem whether there are any formal links between theoretical-reflexive and pragmatic contexts that would lend themselves for a precise description. The latter context is equated by Zeidler with laboratory practice. As for the former, Zeidler notes that "it is nothing else than scientific theory or, in a broader sense, conceptual tools contained in Nancy Cartwright's "toolbox of science",⁴¹ i.e. scientific apparatus, mathematical techniques, approximation methods, etc. Zeidler argues that "experimenters do not need to objectify the concepts they employ because only then their conceptual tools, e.g. theoretical models, will be effective from the viewpoint of their laboratory practice. The objectification referred to above can be – and often is – independent of the interpretation of concepts found in scientific theories, and it does have to entail the premise of "reality" of objective references derived in this manner. "What is more, I believe – Zeidler points out – that experimenters may not be aware, which happens quite often, that objectification is in itself a measure leading to the creation of the postulated reality".⁴²

Latour's concept of constructivism is indisputably dominated by the pragmatic context. This is not to say, however, that the theoretical-reflexive context is entirely absent. Elements which fill the network are components of the above-mentioned "toolbox of science".

Ian Hacking's realism

Ian Hacking strongly argues against the theoretical-reflexive context in a number of works. Referring to the traditional opposition between realism and antirealism in *Intervening and Representing*, Hacking presents himself as a supporter of the former approach. He makes a reservation, though, that he does not profess "realism about theory" which assumes that it is possible to formulate true theories about the world. Instead, Hacking is an advocate of "realism about entity". For example, he assumes the existence of such objects as positrons which are in the focus of interest of physicists. The reality of objects of this type rests on the fact that they are manipulable, i.e. they can be used as tools and deployed in such a way as to interfere in the world during experimental practices. One example is an experiment involving gradual alteration of the charge on a floating niobium ball. The alteration is possible by spraying the ball with a smaller (or greater) amount of positrons. Hacking thus declares: "so far as I'm concerned, if you can spray them (= the positrons) then they are real".⁴³

⁴¹ Cf. P. Zeidler, *Homo experimentator a spór o realizm laboratoryjny*, [in:] D. Sobczyńska, P. Zeidler (red.), *Homo experimentator* (Poznań 2003), p. 126.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 107 (single quotation marks in the word "reality" as in the original).

⁴³ I. Hacking, *Representing and Intervening. Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 23. Hacking's realism is addressed at length by P. Zeidler, *Nowy eksperymentalizm a teoretycyzm. Spór o przedmiot i sposób uprawiania filozofii nauki*,

Hacking's arguments for realism, though, seem somewhat feeble. A particularly pointed critique of Hacking's realist stance on entities has been offered by Hilary Putnam. Putnam believes that even though in Hacking's experiment positrons are assumed to be real, no explanation is offered as to what precisely this assumption means. The author of *Intervening and Representing*, so Putnam argues, only uses the word *r e a l* as a comfortable sound which is devoid of any cognitive links with re-identification, countability, assignment of position, etc. As Putnam phrases it: "I do not, of course, wish to say that positrons aren't real. But believing that positrons are real has conceptual content only because we have a conceptual scheme, a very strange one, one which we don't fully 'understand', but a successful one nonetheless which enables us to know what to say when about positrons, when we can picture them as objects we can spray and when we can't." Referring to James, Putnam goes on to claim that the word positron is not a copy of reality but rather its *t r a n s c r i p t*, while indications as to how the transcript should be used are given by theory. Theories and facts (positrons that are sprayed onto something) are inseparable even conceptually.⁴⁴

Hacking, however, opposes the arguments levelled against his approach by Putnam and other scholars who maintain that facts must *a l w a y s* be accounted for within a specific conceptual paradigm. He presents one line of defence for his position in the study *Language, Truth and Reason* by proposing a thesis on different styles of scientific reasoning. The concept of "style of reasoning" Hacking borrows, by his own admission, from Alistair C. Crombie.⁴⁵ He also applies it, indirectly, to Kantian ideas. Hacking postulates that the concept of "style of reasoning" represents a continuation of attempts undertaken by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* to clarify the possibility of objective experience. Unlike Kant, however, Hacking regards the reason constituting experience as a historical and collective product.⁴⁶

He accommodates the thesis on different styles of scientific reasoning in the context of the problem of truth. The issue, Hacking argues, can be discussed from two perspectives. One of them presupposes the possibility of true description of the world, where truth is conceived of in the classical sense. From the other perspective, whether something is recognized as true or false depends on historical factors which generate a certain style of reasoning that stipulates how to define what is true and what is false. Even though the truth of all propositions may rely on empirical data, the fact that the statements aspire to being recognized

[in:] D. Sobczyńska, P. Zeidler (red.), *Nowy eksperymentalizm – teoretycyzm – reprezentacja* (Poznań 1997), pp. 87–108 and P. Giza, *Realizm I. Hackinga koncepcja realizmu naukowego*, [in:] K. Jodkowski, Z. Muszyński (red.), *O sposobie istnienia rzeczy* (Lublin 1992), pp. 163–180.

⁴⁴ H. Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Oxford 1992), p. 60 (extended spacing and italics as in the original).

⁴⁵ Whereas Crombie discusses "styles of scientific thinking", Hacking uses the term "styles of scientific reasoning", since reasoning implies a more public, as opposed to private, dimension of intellectual operations. Furthermore, it is a broader concept encompassing not only thinking but also speaking, argumentation and presentation. For a more detailed discussion go to I. Hacking, "Style" for *Historian and Philosophers*, [in:] I. Hacking, *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge–London 2002), p. 180.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 181.

as true is a consequence of a historical event. This line of argument, Hacking argues, is by no means circular. He explains that the notion of logic is to be clearly distinguished from the concept of style of reasoning. The former represents the preservation of truth, while the latter introduces the possibility of truth or falsity.⁴⁷

One of the main scholars exploring the former of the perspectives outlined above was Donald Davidson, a prominent American philosopher of language. In Davidson's theoretical system the problem of truth is largely reduced to the determination of truth conditions, i.e. requirements that must be satisfied for a sentence to be recognized as true. Knowledge of the condition is tantamount to knowledge of the meaning of the sentence concerned. Invoking Alfred Tarski's theory of truth, Davidson claims that the sentence: "*my skin is warm*" is true if and only if it is a fact that my skin is warm.⁴⁸

The example is analyzed in detail by Hacking, with an emphasis on a major difference existing between two classes of sentences. Thereby, there are sentences which do not need reference to any particular style of reasoning for their truth to be affirmed, and there are sentences whose truth value can only be determined by reference to such a style. Davidson argues that all sentences should be accommodated within the former class. Hacking, on the other hand, believes that the former class only contains sense-datum sentences such as the sentence given above: "*my skin is warm*". Aside from such sentences, however, Hacking argues in *Language, Truth and Reason*, there are also sentences containing mildly theoretical terms. One example is a sentence formulated by William Herschel in his 1800 study expounding the theory of invisible rays of heat. During his adopted line of argument he rejected the following proposition: "*The heat which has the refrangibility of the red rays is occasioned by the light of those rays*". Naturally, the sentence can be provided with a truth condition stating: "*S is true if and only if p*". The formula, however, does not eliminate the problem faced by someone who is not familiar with the scholar's explanatory framework and his style of scientific reasoning. A foreign translator is not able to translate a sentence comprising such terms as "ray" or "refrangibility" if such notions are absent from the translator's vocabulary. Consequently, translation is not feasible, even by a scholar in the calibre of Archimedes. The translator is not able to assess whether the sentence is true or false because of his or her complete unfamiliarity with the scientific methods that are inherent within the style of reasoning which impacted the creation of the sentence in the first place.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See I. Hacking, *Language, Truth, and Reason*, [in:] I. Hacking, *Historical Ontology...*, p. 167.

⁴⁸ D. Davidson, 'On the very idea of conceptual scheme', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 47 (1974), p. 16. It should also be noted that Davidson employs Convention T which states that S is true if and only if p, where S is a description of a sentence of the object language and p is its translation into the metalanguage, to clarify the concept of sentence translation. Tarski, on the other hand, used Convention T to give a definition of truth.

⁴⁹ Hacking provides an example of applications of the experimental method in science. The method was first introduced in the 17th century, however this neither invalidates science practised at earlier periods in history nor the method itself.

Hacking makes it quite clear, though, that his proposals should not be regarded as yet another variant of the known incommensurability thesis.⁵⁰ Herschel's reasoning cannot be said to assume certain Newtonian foundations which, by affecting the interpretation of the notions of "ray" or "refrangibility", both determine the meaning of sentences containing these notions and preclude the same meaning of such sentences in other theories. Quite the opposite: Herschel's key sentence is relatively resistant to changes in relation to the theory within which it emerged. The sentence was subject to a true-or-false assessment back in 1800. Initially, its author recognized it as true and later rejected as false. Many years later the world re-acknowledged the sentence as true. Referring to the traditional saying that "every stick has two ends", Hacking points out that the English physicist first grabbed the right end of the stick, only to let it go and grab the wrong end. However, if a translator presented with Herschel's sentence (even if it were assumed that the translator were a scientist of such outstanding prominence and accomplishment as Archimedes) is unable to reason in line with Herschel's reasoning style, there would be no stick ends for the translator to pick up.⁵¹

When proposals for determining truth or falsity of statements are linked to different styles of reasoning (which, in turn, depend on a variety of historical factors), it follows that such proposals can be ample. Furthermore, it is impossible to judge which of them are better and which are worse, for every single proposal is construed within its unique style of reasoning. The assumption of there being a diversity of reasoning styles, Hacking maintains, does not lead to subjectivism or relativism because it does not imply the thesis that a statement whose content is independent of our reasoning style can be regarded as either true or false by virtue of our accepted style of reasoning. Moreover, statements which are objectively accepted as true, remain so defined by the style of reasoning which cannot be justified from the outside. "Style – Hacking argues – is not a scheme that confronts reality".⁵² Discoveries that are made in our tradition of practising science become objective "simply because the styles of reasoning that we employ determine what counts as objectivity".⁵³

In opposition to classically defined realism, Hacking proposes a plurality of diverse – historically and socially determined – styles of reasoning. The philosopher believes that plurality, unlike rules of formal logic or Popper's vision of the kingdom of truth, gives scientists a chance to solve problems, formulate truths or gain insights into the nature of things. In that aspect, Hacking gets close to Paul Feyerabend and his "invention of alternatives", hence the theoretical position outlined

⁵⁰ Hacking makes a clear distinction between his idea of style of reasoning and the incommensurability thesis – especially in Kuhn's account postulating that there is no "common measure" between past and present scientific theories. On the other hand, Hacking distances himself from Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation which assumes that there exists a plurality of alternative translations between different conceptual systems. See I. Hacking, *Language, Truth, and Reason*, [in:] I. Hacking, *Historical Ontology...*, pp. 168–171.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 174.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 175 (italics as in the original).

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 161–162.

in *Language, Truth, and Reason* is defined as an anarcho-rationalism, i.e. “tolerance for other people combined with the discipline of one’s own standards of truth and reason”.⁵⁴

The concept of reasoning styles shows that some works of science represent – using the language of earlier discussion – correlations of what is non-human and what is human, i.e. have the form transcendental representation. Other works of science, in contrast, represent relations going from what is non-human to what is human. The former have the form of sentences with a theoretical content which is comprehensible only within a specific style of reasoning. A representative example is: “The heat which has the refrangibility of the red rays is occasioned by the light of those rays”. The latter encompass sentences with a sensory content, as in: “my skin is warm”.⁵⁵ Such sentences are understood without any problems by all humans regardless of any particular style of reasoning.

What Hacking assumes, then, is that science consists both of culturally inculcated spheres and what he terms “domains of boring observations”.⁵⁶ He also addresses the issue of observation without theory,⁵⁷ pointing out that observation is more than passive perception, and requires skill. Some researchers are more proficient – and more effective – in observing reality than others. For example, Caroline Herschel, the sister of William Herschel, discovered more comets than any other person in history. In her astronomical work she used a simple instrument which allowed systematic observations of the sky. Whenever she discerned with the naked eye something that looked like a comet, she employed a telescope to precisely determine the properties of the object that first caught her eye. Importantly, Caroline Herschel possessed a very keen ability: she could identify a comet almost without an error. She knew, therefore, where to focus her attention.

Hacking discusses the example of Caroline Herschel not only to show that observation requires skill but also as an argument contradicting Willard Van Orman Quine’s claims on observation. Quine argues that observation is nothing more than what eyewitnesses unanimously agree to be the observed thing. As Quine phrases it: “Observable in this sense is whatever would be attested to on the spot by any witness in command of the language and his five sense. If scientists were perversely to persist in demanding further evidence beyond what sufficed for

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 176–177.

⁵⁵ In the history of science – Hacking states – there have been many “observations without theory”. One example illustrating the thesis is related to William Herschel’s observations of the sky by means of a telescope. Herschel provided one of the telescopes of his own construction with colour filters. He noticed that filters of different colours convey different amounts of heat. When using some filters, he noticed a marked sensation of heat. When using others, despite seeing a large amount of light he only felt a weak sensation of heat. The observation prompted him to formulate the sentence frequently invoked in this article, i.e. “my skin is warm” or, to be more precise, “my skin is warmed”. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 173 and I. Hacking, *Representing and Intervening...*, pp. 176–177.

⁵⁶ Cf. I. Hacking, *Language, Truth, and Reason...*, p. 171 and I. Hacking, ‘Aristotelian categories and cognitive domains’, *Synthese*, 126 (2001), pp. 492–493.

⁵⁷ See I. Hacking, *Representing and Intervening...*, pp. 174–179.

agreement, their observables would reduce for the most part to those of the whole speech community".⁵⁸

In Hacking's view Quine proposes a rather confusing notion of observation. It is reasonable to assume that no other person belonging to the same linguistic community as Caroline Herschel would be able to state without a moment's hesitation that an object seen in the sky is a comet. Only Caroline Herschel was sufficiently proficient to do so, which does not mean that she was the only person endowed with a capacity to decide what is a comet and what is not. After all, there were also other scientists who, equipped with required accessories and instruments, would eventually reach an agreement with Caroline Herschel on which objects are comets.⁵⁹

In his work *The Social Constructions of What?* Hacking voices a number of objections towards constructivism. While Hacking stops short of rejecting the approach altogether (unlike, for example, Mario Bunge⁶⁰ or Alan Sokal⁶¹) claiming that it is valuable for the description of contemporary science, he devotes quite a lot of space to discussing constructivist limitations. Hacking addresses three issues, termed sticking points,⁶² which exemplify major differences between the constructivist thought (including Latour's proposals) and the realist approach to natural sciences.

The first sticking point is *c o n t i n g e n t i s m* outlined on the basis of Andrew Pickering's study *Constructing Quarks*. Hacking presents a discussion on how to understand Pickering's claim that quarks are socially constructed. Above all, Hacking asserts, it is necessary to distinguish between thoughts and ideas about quarks from quarks regarded as physical objects. Obviously, only the former are social constructs and, what is more, their emergence was not at all inevitable. The course of physics, and essentially the entire science, could have been radically different from what it is now.⁶³ While constructivists support contingentism, realists argue that the progress of science is not accidental and it gradually leads to the accumulation of true information about the world.

The other sticking point is nominalism. Realists share the view that the world has an internal structure which can be described, though it exists even before any attempt at description is undertaken. In that sense, description represents the discovery of the structure. Constructivists, on the other hand, are more inclined to a nominalist view, assuming that the world is so autonomous that humans are not equipped with any categories allowing a description. The sole things humans are capable of achieving are *representations* of the surrounding world. Only such

⁵⁸ W.V. Quine, *Three Indeterminacies*, [in:] D. Follesdal, D.B. Quine (eds.), *Confessions of a Confirmed Extensionalist and Other Essays* (Cambridge 2008), p. 369.

⁵⁹ Cf. I. Hacking, *Representing and Intervening...*, p. 181.

⁶⁰ Cf. M. Bunge, 'A Critical Examination of the New Sociology of Science', part 1, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 21 (1991), pp. 524–560 and part 2 *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 22 (1992), pp. 46–76.

⁶¹ A. Sokal, 'A Physicist Experiments with Cultural Studies', *Lingua France*, May-June 1996, pp. 61–64.

⁶² Cf. I. Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?...*, p. 61.

⁶³ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 68–80.

representations, i.e. conceptual tools, enable humans to interact with the material world.⁶⁴

The third sticking point concerns explanation for stability of scientific belief. Realists argue that the stability is an effect of a mechanism entrenched in science itself, since they make a very clear distinction between the context of justification and the context of discovery (only the former being deemed important for scientific study). Hacking quotes the view put forth by Steven Weinberg, who claims that cultural differences should be refined away, “like slag from ore”, from theory, such as Maxwell’s equations or other laws of natural sciences. Scientists, Weinberg asserts, discover the laws of nature because they are an essential (not contingent) part of physics proper. What is more, the laws of nature describe the internal structure of the real world, which means that they are not only representations of the world – contrary to what nominalists believe. Constructivists also uphold the view that scientific beliefs are stable, however unlike realists they offer an account for that stability. To them, it is not determined solely by factors that are internal to science but also, to a sizeable degree, external factors. A stable scientific network is composed of both types of factor, as demonstrated in Latour’s works.⁶⁵

In the dispute about sticking points Hacking does not take a clear-cut stance. He defines his views on contingentism, nominalism and explanation of stability of scientific belief as, respectively, 2, 4 and 3 in a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents full embracing of realism and 5 – of constructivism. Generally, however, he subscribes to his “realism about entity”, drawing attention to a central difference between natural and social sciences. The former, Hacking explains, make use of classifications which lead to *indifferent kinds*. In the latter, on the other hand, classifications give rise to *interactive kinds*. Objects investigated by natural sciences remain unchanged. By contrast, objects explored by social sciences, due to being affected by feedback mechanisms, are dynamic in nature. Quarks, for example, have no awareness of how they are classified. Based on our knowledge of quarks, we can make them behave in the accelerator in line with our expectations, however regardless of that quarks remain completely passive towards our knowledge. They do not modify their properties because of what we know about them. They are, Hacking states, neutral towards it.

Microbes are similar to quarks in that they, too, have no awareness of being the focus of scientific inquiry and entering into a variety of relations with them. Like quarks, microbes are classified as neutral.⁶⁶

When the object of study encompasses human beings and their actions, however, the situation is radically different. If humans are studied, classifications make those who are classified aware of what assignment they have been given. Consequently, classified subjects may interact with the classification and change their behaviour because of the classification, which ultimately results in their modifica-

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 83.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 84–92.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 104–105.

tions.⁶⁷ In view of their dynamic character, social sciences cannot apply methods derived from natural sciences. Also, they should not, Hacking underscores, strive to explain and predict, as these functions are reserved for natural sciences. Social sciences should seek to understand (*Verstand*) human actions.⁶⁸

3. Conclusions

Constructivism and realism are traditionally located on two opposite poles in the dispute about what scientific facts are. Constructivists believe that facts are products of the scientific community and, in that sense, depend on the cognitive capabilities of scientists. Realists, on the other hand, claim that scientific facts exist independently of any community of scientists, though cognitive capabilities possessed by researchers determine the description and clarifications of facts occurring in reality.

Is the opposition between constructivism and realism, as outlined above, reflected in the theoretical positions proposed by Latour and Hacking? Both thinkers indisputably share a nominalist approach to reality. Also, both maintain that science should be investigated in action. Last, but not least, Latour and Hacking agree on the thesis that the ultimate goal of science is not describing and explaining the world but changing it.

Similarities aside, there are also marked differences between Latour's and Hacking's views. The author of *We Have Never Been Modern* believes that the entire reality is an outcome of a consensus reached between human and non-human actors. There is no world external to the social world. There is one common *universum* which encompasses both these worlds. Consequently, the dualism between an object and knowledge of that object disappears. Both factors then become different aspects of the same whole which is essentially dynamic, without permanent unchanging essence. Whenever scientific practice, and facts obtained within that practice, is discussed, no indifferent kinds can be pinpointed. Scientific facts are representations or, more precisely, transcendental representations.

The author of *The Construction of What?* postulates that reality is only partially a resultant of theoretical assumptions. There is a certain domain of facts which are independent of these assumptions. Positrons, quarks or microbes can be manipulated and used for altering the world, however they should be regarded as objects of a fixed and permanent essence. The fact that our knowledge about them is constantly evolving is of no significance here, for Hacking draws a clear line between facts and theories about facts. He questions the thesis that the two are mutually intertwined. He discusses facts as something one can have direct access to.

Differences existing between Latour's and Hacking's theoretical frameworks justify their assimilation into the traditional constructivism/realism dichotomy. A range of similarities shared by the two sets of beliefs, however, give grounds to see the dichotomy from a slightly different viewpoint than usual.

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 123.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 108.

**Ethics
and
Philosophy of Politics**

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**Hobbesian Anthropology, the Interminable Enemy,
and State Theory: Intellectual Convergences
in Carl Schmitt and Sigmund Freud***

Abstract

The author argues that Carl Schmitt's distinction between *Freund und Feind* and the depiction of the political in stark and aggressive language of friend-enemy relationships appeared to confirm the supposed inherent defects in Schmitt's thinking that underlie his anti-liberal politics. Such critiques overlook, however, that other thinkers, even those deeply entrenched personally and politically in the liberal-democratic tradition, have found value in Schmitt's work or have themselves harbored similar ideas. Among the prominent figures that might be cited in this latter regard, Sigmund Freud is a particularly illuminating case in point. This is especially so because, at first glance, any comparison between Schmitt and Freud might appear highly dubious. Not only were their disciplines (jurisprudence and psychoanalysis) so different, but these two leading thinkers appeared to be mirror opposites of each other in political stances, personal experience, and the judgment of history.

The concept of *Freund und Feind* constituting the specific criterion for the political has elicited more animosity towards Carl Schmitt than perhaps any of his other theories. Condemnation of this concept has often served as the salient argument in attempts to generally discredit the man and his ideas. The very depiction of the political in such stark, seemingly crude and aggressive language as friend-enemy relationships appeared to confirm the supposed inherent defects in Schmitt's thinking that underlie his anti-liberal politics.¹ Such critiques overlook, however, that other thinkers, even those deeply entrenched personally and politically in the liberal-democratic tradition, have found value in Schmitt's work or have themselves harbored similar ideas. Among the prominent figures that might

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 4 [1] (2009), pp. 59–70.

¹ See M. Lilla, 'The Enemy of Liberalism', *The New York Review of Books*, 44 [8] (1997), pp. 38–44.

be cited in this latter regard, Sigmund Freud is a particularly illuminating case in point. This is especially so because, at first glance, any comparison between Schmitt and Freud might appear highly dubious.²

Not only were their disciplines (jurisprudence and psychoanalysis) so different, but these two leading thinkers appeared to be mirror opposites of each other in political stances, personal experience, and the judgment of history. Freud, the progressive Viennese liberal of Jewish descent, remained very much a child of the Enlightenment, while Schmitt, of conservative Catholic heritage, ranked among the most renowned critics of eighteenth-century liberal thought and its nineteenth-century legacies in political and legal theory. Forced into exile in 1938, Freud also became a victim of the very Nazi regime with which Schmitt had collaborated. Moreover, Schmitt had little to say about Freud and it is unknown whether the latter was aware of Schmitt's work at all.³

Nonetheless, even a cursory reading of the works of these two intellectuals reveals parallels in their political thinking that are simply too striking to either ignore or minimize. This is true whether one considers such basic questions in

² The documentation for this article has been revised to include the most recently available sources on Schmitt from his *Nachlass*, particularly his published and unpublished diaries. The text remains essentially in the original because the latest documentation further substantiates its inferences, arguments, and conclusions.

³ Schmitt started reading Freud before World War I. He made reference to Freud's theories in *Gesetz und Urteil: Eine Untersuchung zum Problem der Rechtspraxis* (München, 1912), p. 19; and in 1919, he critically addressed the psychoanalytical approach to causation in human behavior and history in *Politische Romantik* (3rd ed. Berlin 1968), pp. 118–120. The recently published Schmitt diaries of 1912–1915 confirm that he read only Freud's works on psychoanalysis and those on culture and religion such as *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*. Although into the 1950's he might occasionally invoke a Freudian allusion (e.g., the “killing of the primordial father”), from his earliest years Schmitt harshly rejected psychoanalysis. In Schmitt's early diaries, he noted that “Freud ein Schwein ist,” dismissing psychoanalysis as “a ridiculous theory.” See C. Schmitt, *Tagebücher, Oktober 1912 bis Februar 1915*, E. Hüsmert (ed.) (Berlin 2003), pp. 36, 57–58, 246. Schmitt's otherwise extraordinarily significant and revealing diaries of his years of military service contain no references to Freud. See C. Schmitt, *Die Militärzeit 1915 bis 1919*, E. Hüsmert, G. Giesler (eds.) (Berlin 2005).

In 1923, Schmitt had his Jewish publisher, Ludwig Feuchtwanger, send him a copy of Freud's *Group Psychology and The Analysis of the Ego*, which apparently only reinforced Schmitt's inherent condemnation. In his private notes of August 1923, Schmitt disparagingly compared psychoanalytical methodology to the “ridiculous mythology of historical materialism.” See C. Schmitt, L. Feuchtwanger, *Briefwechsel, 1918–1935*, R. Riess (ed.) (Berlin 2007), p. 29. See also Schmitt's unpublished diaries, with the tentative title *Der Schatten Gottes: Aufzeichnungen aus den Jahren 1922 bis 1924*, Carl Schmitt Nachlass, Nordrhein-Westfälischen Hauptstaatsarchiv, Düsseldorf, RW 265–19605.

It is unknown whether Schmitt ever read those works of Freud dealing with politics, the state, and war such as *Civilization and Its Discontents* or *War and Death*. Schmitt's reactions to these Freudian excursions into political thought would have been rather intriguing, since these were the works in which the Hobbesian dimensions of Freud were so clearly articulated. There is, in fact, much ironic potential here. For Schmitt often categorized Freud, Marx, and Darwin as the progenitors of similar grandiose systems of thought which he found seriously wanting. Perhaps had he read more of Freud's political thought, Schmitt would have discovered not only the general Hobbesian perspectives they shared but also that, ironically, they had almost identical observations and criticisms of Marxism as a system of thought as well as a political movement, particularly in the Bolshevik variant in Russia. See C. Schmitt, *Glossarium: Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–1951* (Berlin 1991), pp. 61, 100, 214–215, 262, 310–311, 318–319.

political theory as the political nature of men, the role of the state, or war itself. It is also so concerning such precise concepts as friends and enemies. For generally speaking, the historical experiences of the ages, as well as the behavior of organized groups they observed in their own time, offered a disturbing vision to both Schmitt and Freud of a world full of harsh political realities and interminable conflict arising from friend-enemy distinctions.⁴

Many of the similarities in the political ideas of Freud and Schmitt emanated from a basic agreement as to the fundamental anthropological nature of man, which Schmitt contended was the test by which all political theories could be categorized. For both thinkers were unabashed Hobbesians.⁵ To Schmitt, “[...] all genuine political theories presuppose man to be...a dangerous and dynamic being,” while Freud invoked the phrase *homo homini lupus* (“man is as a wolf to other men”).⁶ “Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked,” Freud wrote, “they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness... [whose neighbors] tempts him to satisfy their aggressiveness on him [...] to seize his possession, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture him and to kill him.” This immutable “inclination of human beings to be aggressive

⁴ The comparison with Freud is also important in light of the recent claim that Schmitt’s friend-enemy thesis “had to end in the Jews being excluded from German society in some radical way.” See D. Dyzenhaus, *Legality and Legitimacy: Carl Schmitt, Hans Kelsen, and Hermann Heller in Weimar* (New York 1997), pp. 100–101. This erroneous and ill-conceived argument is countered not only by the fact that Freud held similar ideas to Schmitt on friends and enemies, but that other significant thinkers of Jewish heritage, including Leo Strauss and Waldemar Gurian, praised *Der Begriff des Politischen*. Indeed, the Nazis explicitly rejected Schmitt’s friend-enemy thesis precisely because it was a neutral concept totally devoid of racial or anti-Semitic meaning. See J.W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton 1983), pp. 93–95, 222–223, 238–240. Although Schmitt’s published and unpublished diaries, in particular those of 1930–1934, do reveal an undeniable anti-Semitism in Schmitt that is yet to be adequately explained, these newly available sources do not support the untenable claims that Schmitt’s works were inherently anti-Semitic. These documents certainly do not suggest, as some have alleged, that his legal and political theories were an attempt to construct a purely German type of legal theory as a bulwark against Jewish thought and forces accelerating the process of modernization. See C. Schmitt, *Tagebücher 1930–1934*, W. Schuller, G. Giesler (eds.) (Berlin 2010). For an effort to interpret Schmitt’s corpus as essentially anti-Semitic and directed against alleged Jewish influences see R. Gross, *Carl Schmitt und die Juden: Eine deutsche Rechtslehre* (Frankfurt am Main 2000), and my critical review of its English translation in *Central European History*, 43 (2010), pp. 377–380.

⁵ The relationship between Schmitt and Hobbes is among the most significant questions concerning this jurist. Those exponents of the recent “theological twist” in Schmitt studies seriously underestimate this key Hobbesian dimension to his thinking. See A. Koenen, *Der Fall Carl Schmitt: Sein Aufstieg zum “Kronjuristen” des Dritten Reiches* (Darmstadt 1995). However, the Hobbesian influence on Schmitt is undeniable. Not only did Schmitt write on Hobbes but he personally identify with him in *Ex Captivitate Salus: Erfahrungen der Zeit 1945/47* (Cologne 1950) and elsewhere. Hobbes also holds a central theoretical place in Schmitt’s Weimar works as well as his later *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaem* (Berlin 1960). See also H. Rumpf, *Carl Schmitt und Thomas Hobbes: Ideelle Beziehungen und aktuelle Bedeutung mit einer Abhandlung über: Die Frühschriften Carl Schmitts* (Berlin 1972).

⁶ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin 1963), pp. 59, 61, 64–65.

towards one another,” Freud viewed as “greatest impediment to civilization”.⁷ It was here, the psychoanalyst’s noted biographer Peter Gay pointed out, that “Freud linked up with the tough-minded political thought of Thomas Hobbes”.⁸

Although it was psychoanalysis that led Freud to identify the source of this innate aggressiveness as related to a subconscious wish for destruction and death, its existence and power were also self-evident from the “experience of life and history.” The “atrocities” of the past, of the Huns, Jenghiz Khan and Tamerlane, or crusaders in Jerusalem, had their continuities in the “horrors of the recent World War”.⁹ And Schmitt, while tending to disparage psychoanalysis in favor of more traditional political and sociological methodologies, with their emphasis on rational causation and objectives, nonetheless, did cite his agreement with Wilhelm Dilthey on Machiavelli’s “psychological observations,” including “animality, drives, passions... [and] above all love and fear,” as well as “irrational life decisions”.¹⁰

No matter what sources, psychological or otherwise, to which one could trace motives, the supposition of *homo homini lupus* led both thinkers to view the social relationships of men to men as among the most problematical of all questions of human existence. The attempt at regulating such volatile relationships, Freud argued, led to the establishment of the community and subsequently civilization as group identities, interests, and power dominated and subdued individual ones. The community acquired the monopoly on violence and on the determination of law or what is accepted as “right”, both of which were necessary for maintaining the stability and endurance of the community. It is the monopoly on violence that provides the conditions for the “rule of law” which, in turn, ensures the emotional identity, loyalty and acceptance of members of such communal control. Freud held, in fact, a relativistic and positivistic concept of law as the will of the community which “[...] implies nothing as to the ethical value of such a law.” And “justice”, far from suggesting a reflection of a higher or universal law, is essentially equality before the law. In a functional sense, “Peoples are more or less represented by the states which they form, and these states by the governments which rule them”.¹¹

In this context, there appears to be little real difference, theoretically or practically, between the purpose and nature of Freud’s “community” and that of Schmitt’s “state.” As “the political status of an organized people in an enclosed territorial unit,” the state, according to Schmitt, has as its primary purpose the maintenance of order, peace, and tranquility which are “the prerequisite for legal

⁷ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, [in:] P. Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader* (New York 1989), pp. 755, 770–772. See also P.E. Stepansky, *A History of Aggression in Freud* (New York 1997).

⁸ P. Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York 1988), p. 546. On Freud’s Hobbesian thought see also P. Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (New York 1961), pp. 214, 243–244.

⁹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 749–750; S. Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, [in:] S. Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIV, transl. J. Strachey (London 1957), pp. 281, 285; S. Freud, *Why War?*, [in:] S. Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XXII (London 1964), pp. 203–215.

¹⁰ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 60–62

¹¹ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 740–741, 750, 756. S. Freud, *Group Psychology and The Analysis of the Ego*, [in:] S. Freud, *Complete Psychological Works*, vol. XVIII (London 1955); *Why War?*, pp. 275–278; *War and Death*, pp. 279–280.

norms [rule by law] to be valid.” To this end, the state must remain the decisive political entity whose power transcends that of all other associations and whose authority grants it a monopoly on the *jus belli*. To no other entity belongs the “right to demand from its own members the readiness to die and unhesitatingly to kill enemies.”¹² And Freud definitely concurred on this central point: “A belligerent state permits itself every such misdeed, every such act of violence, as would disgrace the individual... The state exacts the utmost degree of obedience and sacrifice from its citizens...” and in war “it stamps strangers as enemies, whose death is to be brought about or desired; it tells us to disregard the death of those we love”.¹³

It was such distinctions between friend and enemy that actually constituted the criterion or essence of the political for Schmitt. States defined themselves and their members were bound together by identities or similarities created from various sources, such as territory, religion, nationality, etc., which at the same time distinguished and separated them existentially from those outside their political entity. What determined the political was always “[...] the degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation.” As Schmitt phrased it, “every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy”.¹⁴ Freud, too, clearly viewed the social relations of men as they were organized and regulated through communities or states in terms of a friend-enemy dichotomy, of identities and dissimilarities, of the familiar and the stranger.

In *Group Psychology*, one of Freud’s first excursions in social psychology, he invoked Schopenhauer’s simile of the freezing porcupines to illustrate the antagonisms emanating from like and dissimilar qualities. Drawn together by the common need for warmth they are likewise repelled by their quills until some tolerable distance provides a mutual accommodation of interest and danger. Through group formation, individuals within “[...] tolerate the peculiarities of its other members, equate themselves with them, and have no feeling of aversion toward them.” An emotional tie or identification of “common quality” or “whatever leads men to share important interests produces this community of feeling, these identifications. And the structure of human society is to a large extent based on them.” However, even after group formation the “mutual hostility of human beings” threatens social cohesion so significantly that civilization has to expend enormous efforts to prevent domestic conflict and even societal disintegration. Since this inherent “readiness for hatred, an aggressiveness,” continues to exist within groups, “We are no longer astonished that greater differences should lead to an almost insuperable repugnance, such as the Gallic people feel for the German, the Aryan for the Semite, and the white races for the coloured.” One method of binding a group together in love, Freud argued, is by providing an outlet for their hostility in the

¹² C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 20, 43–50, 53–54.

¹³ S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 299.

¹⁴ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 26–28, 37–38.

form of "[...] the other people... [who are targeted] to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness".¹⁵

Recognizing its central importance conceptually and in social reality, both Freud and Schmitt paid far more attention in their analyses to the other (the potential enemy) and the likelihood of conflict with him, than to the group associate – the friend. Since friend-enemy relationships can develop from countless diverse and changing spheres of existence, there are no natural or permanent enemies for Schmitt. The enemy need not be considered morally evil or an object of hatred; neither is he the private competitor, but always only the public enemy of the group not the individual. What matters is that, through some characteristic of his nature or situation, the political enemy is "[...] the other, the stranger, [who is] in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible." Following Hegel's idea of the enemy as mutually "negated otherness," Schmitt saw the decisive point when it is determined that "[...] the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence".¹⁶

The biblical quote "Love your enemies" could only refer, Schmitt insisted, to the private adversary and not the public enemy. Christians, for example, never considered allowing love for the Turk to lead to the abandonment of Europe to Moslem forces.¹⁷ And Freud's reaction to "Love thine enemies" was far harsher; it "[...] seems to me," he exclaimed, "even more incomprehensible and arouses still stronger opposition in me" than the principle of "love thy neighbor," which he also found problematical. Paralleling Schmitt's interpretation that "it certainly does not mean that one should love and support the enemies of one's own people," Freud asserted rather forcefully how difficult it would be to love the "stranger". "Indeed, I should be wrong to do so, for my love is valued by all my own people as a sign of my preferring them, and it is an injustice to them if I put a stranger on a par with them." Moreover, the stranger "[...] has more claim to my hostility and even my hatred [...] since he has no hesitation in injuring me [...] and the more helpless I am, the more certainly I can expect him to behave like this to me".¹⁸

The ineradicable source of such Hobbesian relationships are, Freud wrote, the "undeniable differences" arising from various existential natures and circumstances of men and groups. These mutually repelling existential differences have caused conflict throughout history, as an innate "cruel aggressiveness" against the stranger has channeled hostility away from potential internal strife and reinforced the social cohesion of the group as well. "In this respect, the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered most useful services to the civilizations of the countries that have been their hosts..." Even the Christian concept of universal love related only to those who belonged to the community of believers; extreme cruelty

¹⁵ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp. 98, 101–102, 105–108, 119; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 747–752.

¹⁶ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 27–28, 62–63.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 28–30.

¹⁸ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 748–749.

and intolerance were exercised against the outsiders. Since for Freud “killing an enemy [also] satisfied an instinctual inclination,” he continued to recognize that in the modern world “[...] for strangers and enemies we do acknowledge death, and consign them to it quite and readily as unhesitatingly as did primeval man.” The enemy serves such a useful purpose, Freud mused, “One only wonders, with concern, what the Soviets will do after they have wiped out their bourgeois”.¹⁹

The decision to identify and combat a foreign enemy remained for Schmitt the prerogative of the state and for Freud its theoretical equivalent – the community. Schmitt recognized that in extreme cases the state might also confront a *Staatsfeind* (domestic enemy), consisting of any societal group that sought the destruction of the existing political order or which, in its conflicts with other groups, threatened to create domestic turmoil. Either case could, and historically had, culminated in civil war, endangering the very survival of the state. “Every state provides, therefore, some kind of formula for the declaration of an internal enemy”.²⁰ Like Schmitt, Freud also felt that, though common needs and identities usually provide for peaceful resolutions within a community, unavoidable domestic “conflicts of interest” could cause violence. A completely and permanently pacified state remains “only theoretically conceivable.” Thus, if the violence of the individual is to be transformed into, and maintained as, the violence of the community for its common interests, the community “[...] must draw up regulations to anticipate the risk of rebellion and must institute authorities to see that those regulations – the laws – are respected and to superintend the execution of legal acts of violence”.²¹

Nonetheless, the focus of Schmitt and Freud remained the foreign enemy and war rather than civil war or revolution. From their observations of human behavior historically and in the contemporary world, they had concluded that war was an inevitable consequence of the relations among states. But neither was bellicose, or could be considered a militarist or advocate of war in pursuit of some theoretical or concrete political or economic objective. They warily accepted its presence as a horrible, lamentable fact of existence, which could not be eliminated by theoretical formulations to the contrary or sincere, reasonable desires for peace. It was the extreme case to be avoided, if at all possible, but it persisted as an ever-present reality nonetheless. “War,” Schmitt held, “is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequences of enmity... [and] must remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid”.²² Writing during the previously unimagined destructiveness of World War I, while his sons served at the front, Freud, likewise, agreed that “[...] war cannot be abolished; so long as the conditions of existence among nations are so different and their mutual repulsion so violent, there are bound to be wars”.²³

The only time Freud appeared to deviate from this position was at the very end of *Why War*, an exchange of public letters with Albert Einstein on the subject in

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 749–752; S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 297; *Why War?*, p. 204.

²⁰ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 46–47.

²¹ S. Freud, *Why War?*, pp. 205–206.

²² C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 33.

²³ S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 299.

1932, sponsored by the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. Here, Freud, the theorist of innate aggression, declared himself a pacifist, who could not help but “rebel against war.” In addition to the perennial killing, waste, and oppression of war, modern technology had become so destructive that it held out the possibility of exterminating one or more of the belligerents and possibly the demise of civilization itself. Freud hoped that it was not utopian to think that cultural advancements, that would restrain and internalize instinctual aggression, together with the terror of modern warfare, would eventually prevent wars. But this conclusion contradicted not only the logic, tone, and arguments of most of what he actually wrote in this same essay about the nature and causes of war, it ran counter to the Hobbesian thinking that furnished the foundation for much of his approach to politics and society. This *volte face* constituted a kind of wishful thinking highly uncharacteristic of the otherwise sober, realistic Freud. He seemed, in fact, aware of the tenuous nature of the position he attempted to establish, as he juxtaposed next to his utopian statement a question that undermined its likelihood of fulfillment: “And how long shall we have to wait before the rest of mankind become pacifists too. There is no telling”.²⁴

Freud’s belatedly proclaimed pacifism aside, his attitude towards war was not that different, if at all, from Schmitt’s. Describing why he now rebelled against war, Freud wrote: “[...] because everyone has a right to his own life, because war puts an end to human lives that are full of hope, because it brings individual men into humiliating situations, because it compels them against their will to murder other men, and because it destroys precious material objects which have been produced by the labours of humanity... [and] in its presentday form war is no longer an opportunity for achieving the old ideals of heroism...”.²⁵

Schmitt’s own reactions to the nature and purpose of war were quite comparable: “But no program, no ideal, no norm, no expediency confers the right to dispose of the physical life of other human beings. To demand seriously of human beings that they kill others and be prepared to die themselves so that trade and industry may flourish for the survivors or that the purchasing power of grandchildren may grow is sinister and crazy [...]. There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason. If such physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat to one’s own way of life, then it cannot be justified”.²⁶

Not only did Schmitt remain convinced that such existential threats inherent in friend-enemy antagonisms would continue to culminate in war, but Freud, his pacifist hopes notwithstanding, tended to agree. For Freud had followed his own reasons for rejecting war with qualifications more consistent with his earlier political and social thought. He acknowledged that his position was debatable on such questions as whether “[...] every war is not open to condemnation to an equal

²⁴ S. Freud, *Why War?*, pp. 214–215.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 213.

²⁶ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 48–50.

degree.” Equally important, Freud conceded that “so long as there exist countries and nations that are prepared for the ruthless destruction of others, those others must be armed for war”.²⁷ Freud’s conversion to optimism appears even more doubtful when one considers that merely a year before he had concluded the second edition of *Civilization and Its Discontents* with misgivings as to whether mastery of aggression and even dread of total annihilation by modern technology could prevent an ultimate fateful outcome. There was a hope that “eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary [death/aggression],” he wrote, “But who can foresee with what success and with what result?”²⁸

Even more striking was the strain of pessimism pervading Freud’s thoughts as well as those of Schmitt. They were cognizant that their assumptions, analyses, and results would perturb, even shock, much of their audience, and anticipated hostile receptions of their work. They rarely hesitated to chide their critics for their lack of realism or unwillingness to abandon the false sense of security that any candid examination would force upon them. Like Hobbes and Machiavelli, Schmitt offered a “disquieting diagnosis.” Such “[...] realism can frighten men in need of security... [because man] prefers the illusion of an undisturbed calm and does not endure pessimists”.²⁹ Freud, the great destroyer of the illusions of traditional as well as modern culture, argued that man’s quest for happiness often resulted in the creation of whatever arguments were necessary to support his illusions. That is why it was so easy in the prewar milieu of bourgeois security to deceive ourselves that western civilization, in contrast to that of others, had achieved unique heights for humanity. Part of the shock of witnessing actual behavior in the Great War was due to the fact that many of these assumptions about humanity “[...] were based on illusion... [for] in reality our fellow-citizens have not sunk so low as we feared, because they had never risen so high as we believed.” Men recoiled from Freud’s candor because he could “[...] offer them no consolation: for at bottom that is what they are all demanding – the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers”.³⁰

To many of these critics, the horrors of the war had definitely demonstrated the unavoidable necessity of rejecting traditional power politics and of finding a less destructive alternative to organized relations among nations. But despite their own revulsion at the realities of war, Freud and Schmitt felt that the facts contradicted this contemporary illusion. Freud even denied the treatises of those anthropologists who had claimed that cultural groups existed in various parts of the globe who either did not have instinctual aggression or mastered it by providing for all basic human needs, thus living in freedom and tranquility.³¹ Schmitt’s response was equally unwavering: “It is irrelevant here whether one rejects, or accepts, or perhaps finds it an atavistic remnant of barbaric times that nations

²⁷ S. Freud, *Why War?*, p. 214.

²⁸ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 772.

²⁹ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 64–66.

³⁰ S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 285; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 771–772.

³¹ S. Freud, *Why War?*, pp. 211–212.

continue to group themselves according to friend and enemy... [For] rationally speaking, it cannot be denied the nations continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis".³²

Marxism and liberalism, especially the variant of the latter in the form of a new international order through the League of Nations, were among the most prominent movements offering alternatives to the politics of conflict that Freud and Schmitt criticized. To Schmitt, Marxism, had usurped for itself the banner of universal humanity, on whose behalf the Communists would wage "[...] the final battle against the last enemy of humanity" – the bourgeoisie. But despite its claims of establishing a new world order in a post-revolutionary era, Marxism, Schmitt concluded, was a political power like any other that might arise and had merely substituted the "international class enemy" for other friend-enemy antagonisms.³³

Using similar concepts and terminology, Freud expressed an identical assessment of Marxism. He challenged in particular the very notion that with the destruction of private property and the bourgeoisie "[...] illwill and hostility would disappear among men. Since everyone's needs would be satisfied, no one would have any reason to regard another as his enemy." Yet, in Russia, Marxism has evolved ideologically and institutionally into a dogmatism with "an uncanny likeness to what it is fighting against." Its new enemies are ideological deviants within and class enemies without. Anyone within the movement who fails to adhere to the correct interpretation "[...] is punished in the same way heresy was once punished by the Catholic church." Moreover, the Russian Communists "[...] are armed today with the most scrupulous care and not the least important methods by which they keep their supporters together is hatred of everyone beyond their borders".³⁴

Freud also challenged the Marxist postulate that by eliminating the alleged sources of conflict and oppression – classes, property, economic need, etc. – one could, over generations, "alter human nature" to such an extent that aggression would be eliminated from the relations among men and then the dream of the new society of universal humanity and equality brought to fruition. But the anthropological and psychological assumptions underpinning such goals, Freud asserted, rested upon "an untenable illusion." Historical experience, even trends in the Bolshevikism itself, and Freud's lifetime work clearly revealed, in his mind, the utopian nature of such expectations.³⁵

It was Freud's recognition of the "untamable character of human nature" that made his psychology equally challenging to many of the principles and aspirations of liberalism.³⁶ The major thrust of *Civilization and Its Discontents* was that

³² C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 28–29.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 37–38, 62–63, 73.

³⁴ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 750; *The Question of a Weltanschauung*, [in:] *Freud Reader*, p. 794; *Why War?*, p. 212.

³⁵ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 750–751.

³⁶ As to why, despite his pessimism about human nature and skepticism of so many liberal political expectations, Freud should still be considered a classical liberal see P. Gay, *Freud*, pp. 16–18, 547–548, and P. Rieff, *Freud*, pp. 270, 277. Ronald Clark answered this question by classifying Freud as an "old fashioned liberal." See R. Clark, *Freud: The Man and His Cause*

despite the conquest of nature and the achievement of material progress through tremendous advances in science and technology, the very biological-psychological nature of man precluded the fulfillment of the ideals of freedom, morality, and happiness that the improvement in material civilization would supposedly produce. The very existence of civilization demands repression, causing dissatisfaction and neuroses. One of the essential causes of disillusionment with nineteenth-century expectations was that the barbaric behavior of states and individuals during World War I shattered the belief that this “highest human civilization” had achieved such social progress in the spheres of morality, rationality, truth, and general humanitarian concern.³⁷

For Schmitt, it was this combination of eighteenth-century intellectual-moral progress and nineteenth-century economic/technological advancement that formed the basis for the liberal assault against the state, tradition, and politics, which supposedly inhibited freedom as well as improvements in the material and ethical conditions of humanity. But the new societal restraints, modern forms of economic exploitation, and the weapons of mass destruction produced by the most advanced science and technology have proven that material “progress no longer produces *eo ipso* the humanitarian and moral perfection which was considered progress in the eighteenth century”.³⁸

Schmitt also contested liberalism’s hope that economic development and interdependence would reduce the power political conflicts of the past, because “economic antagonism can become political...” and thus continue to serve very much as the source of friend-enemy relationships. They cannot be neutralized or depoliticized as liberal theory proposed. In any event, economic benefits, no matter how great, would never supersede or eliminate the other aspects of human existence that divided men with such intensity that conflict results.³⁹ Once again, Freud appeared to agree: “We had hoped, certainly, that the extensive community of interests established by commerce and production would constitute the germ of such a compulsion, but it would seem that nations still obey their passions far more than their interests. Their interests serve them, at most as rationalizations for their passions; they put forward their interests in order to be able to give reasons for satisfying their passions”.⁴⁰

Both thinkers realized that, rather than depoliticizing various spheres of life, opposing sides in friend-enemy relationships attempt to usurp the banner of universality and truth by claiming that they hold a neutral, disinterested position. They promoted their own political cause under the guise of “natural law or law of reason,” etc., while simultaneously undermining similar claims by their opponent. During war, Freud noted, “science herself lost her passionless impartiality; her deeply embittered servants seek for weapons from her with which to contribute towards the struggle with the enemy. Anthropologists feel driven to declare him

(New York 1980), p. 484.

³⁷ S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *passim*; *War and Death*, pp. 278–280.

³⁸ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 72–77.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 68–71, 75–78.

⁴⁰ S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 288.

inferior and degenerate, while psychiatrists issue a diagnosis of his disease of mind or spirit".⁴¹ A frequent contemporary effort of this kind, Schmitt stated, was in identifying one's own position with that of humanity and civilization, thereby delegitimizing and devaluing – perhaps even dehumanizing – the enemy.⁴² Like Schmitt, Freud had experienced this directly when he found the very essence of his cherished German culture maligned and under attack by western countries that had usurped as their own the rule of reason, freedom, and humanity. "Indeed," Freud retorted in reference to Germany, "one of the great civilized nations is so universally unpopular that the attempt can actually be made to exclude it from the civilized community as 'barbaric', although it has long proved its fitness by the magnificent contributions to that community which it has made... [and it] has been precisely the one which has least transgressed the laws of civilization".⁴³

Neither Freud nor Schmitt had much faith in the post-World War I attempt to achieve similar liberal objectives by organizing a supranational institution that could claim universality and serve as a judge in conflicts of interests among states. But the very structural components of the League of Nations (i.e., sovereign states) prevented it from having the authority and power necessary to succeed. Its efficacy depended, Schmitt claimed, on two unlikely developments: grasping the *jus belli* from all other political entities (presumably also from the very states that compose the League) and, at the same time, not assuming that authority and power for itself.⁴⁴ Freud was even more Hobbesian in tone when expressing the reasons for his pessimism about the League's prospects: "[...] the attempt to replace actual force with the force of ideas seems at present doomed to failure. We shall be making a false calculation if we disregard the fact that law was originally brute violence and that even today it cannot do without the support of violence".⁴⁵

In the final analyses, though the sources of conflict and the specific associations and dissociations might change with time and context, Schmitt and Freud assumed that friend-enemy relationships would endure. There will always remain, Schmitt wrote acknowledging his debt to Hobbes, "concrete human groupings which fight with other concrete human groupings in the name of justice, humanity, order, or peace".⁴⁶ Freud's prognosis for the future was equally pessimistic. He expected that new motivations of significance to groups would perennially ensure that "[...] there will be the same intolerance towards outsiders as in the age of the Wars of Religion...".⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 275.

⁴² C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 54–56.

⁴³ S. Freud, *War and Death*, p. 279.

⁴⁴ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, pp. 56–58.

⁴⁵ S. Freud, *Why War?*, pp. 207–209.

⁴⁶ C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, p. 66–67.

⁴⁷ S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 99.

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The Pluralism of the Political: From Carl Schmitt to Hannah Arendt*

Abstract

In trying to assess Hannah Arendt's approach to the problem of pluralism of the political it is illuminating to contrast her views with Carl Schmitt's concern with pluralism. The author argues that in renewing Schmitt's question "what is politics?", Arendt turned herself into a political theorist and that in trying to answer this question she came up with the conclusion that politics rests on the fact of human plurality. In relating Arendt and Schmitt in this way one has to keep in mind, however, that their real and substantive affinities have always been qualified by equally real and substantial disagreements. Careful scrutiny reveals that Arendt was certainly familiar with many of Schmitt's writings and that she regarded him highly as an outstanding scholar, a jurist with ingenious theories, and a most able defender of his views. But she constantly qualified her praise for she has also seen Schmitt as a scholar who did his utmost to supply the Nazis with ideas and techniques.

We can pinpoint almost to the day the moment at which Hannah Arendt became a political theorist and we can name with precision the experiences that made her one. Born in 1906, she had led a substantially a-political life till Hitler gained power and she fled Germany in 1933. In Paris she became an activist, busy in Jewish refugee affairs, but with little time for abstract reflection. The end of the war and her book on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* marked a new but still only transitional phase in her life. The work is best understood as a piece of speculative history seeking to draw the phenomena of anti-Semitism, imperialism, National Socialism and Soviet Communism together in a single narrative but it hinted at the same time at more philosophical ambitions. Those had to wait, however, till the book was completed; it was then and then only, in the Spring of 1950, that Arendt finally launched into political theory.

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We can follow her next moves from a diary, begun at that time, in which she was to record her thoughts for the next twenty-three years.¹ Her first entries in June 1950 still hark back to the book she had just finished. Two months later, though, in August, her thought takes a new and surprising turn when she asks herself – out of the blue so it seems – the provocative question “what is politics?”² And the remarkable thing is that what she wrote at the time in answer to this question was to occupy her philosophically for the rest of her life. This diary entry thus signals the beginning of Arendt’s career as a political thinker. That she had embarked on a new course is evident also from a letter to Karl Jaspers of October 4 of 1950 in which she confided to her old teacher and friend that having just finished the proofs for her *Totalitarianism* book, she was having “the most wonderful time” reading Plato’s political dialogues (*The Laws*, *The Statesman*, and the *Republic*).³ Her diary records that she went on to study Aristotle and Cicero, Kant and Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, Hobbes, Montesquieu, Locke, and Rousseau. She read these authors with care but was also from the start highly critical of them and indeed of the entire tradition of political philosophy. In December of 1950 she would write to Jaspers accordingly that she had been “thinking a lot about the affinity between philosophy and tyranny or rather the preference of the philosophers for a rational tyranny which is always, of course, the tyranny of reason”.⁴ She did not specify her charge at the time but later identified Plato and Heidegger, in particular, as two philosophers who had succumbed to the lure of tyranny. In December 1950 she may also have been thinking of Carl Schmitt whose work and involvement with the Nazis had been much on her mind when writing *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

In *What is politics?* Arendt had roundly attacked the philosophers for failing to get at the deepest problems of politics. “The difference in quality between the political philosophy of the great thinkers and their other work is startling – even in Plato. Politics never reaches the same depth”.⁵ The problem was that “for all scientific thinking – in biology and psychology as well as in philosophy and theology – there is only Man” whereas politics, she added, “rests on the fact of human plurality.” This observation led her to a multifaceted indictment of political thought. (1) The political philosophers had generally assumed that Man is by nature a political being when in reality “Man [as a either species or an individual] is a-political” since “politics originates in the In-between-men and thus, of course, *outside* Man.” (2) The belief that Man was created in the image of God had re-enforced this neglect of human plurality and that doctrine had to be dismissed as unqualified “nonsense.” Later, Arendt would add that according to the biblical text God had created both a man and a woman and thus a plurality. (3) Philosophers had also often sought to conceive of politics in terms of the

¹ H. Arendt, *Denktagebuch. 1950–1973*, U. Ludz, I. Nordmann (eds.), 2 vols. (München 2002) (hereafter cited as “DT”).

² *Ibidem*, vol. 1, p. 15. The note had previously been published in *Was ist Politik?*, U. Ludz (ed.) (München–Zürich 1993) and has since appeared in English translation in H. Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*.

³ H. Arendt, K. Jaspers, *Briefwechsel. 1926–1969* (München 1973), p. 195.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 196.

⁵ DT, p. 15.

family but this was its “ruination” and “perversion” because, in yet another way, it “obliterates the fundamental quality of plurality or, rather, forfeits it through the introduction of the concept of relatedness.” (4) Western thought (specifically in its Hegelian and Marxist forms) had tried to turn politics into history. Through envisaging a world historical process determined by a set of necessary laws such thinking has reduced the plurality of human beings to a single, undifferentiated humanity. “Hence the monstrous and inhuman character of history which only at its end comes to prevail fully and brutally in politics,” Arendt wrote in her note with an eye to her just finished book. Asserting that “freedom exists only in the peculiar in-between area of politics,” she accused Hegel and Marx of an “escape from this freedom into the ‘necessity’ of history. A detestable absurdity.”

Margaret Canovan has rightly argued that Arendt’s analysis of modernity is most fruitfully treated “as a context for the interesting things she has to say about the fact that politics goes on among plural persons with space between them”.⁶ But she overstates her case when she insists that Arendt “‘augmented’ the world by one word: the word plurality”.⁷ From Aristotle to Schmitt political philosophers have, in fact, never been unaware of the pluralism of the political. If they are, nevertheless, to be criticized for failing to grasp that politics rests on human plurality, it must be because they have not properly taken this fact into account. This is, indeed, Arendt’s charge.

Arendt was certainly aware from early on that Aristotle had lambasted Plato for his failure to recognize the pluralism of the political.⁸ Against Plato’s assertion that there is no greater evil for a city “than that which tears it apart and makes it many instead of one,”⁹ Aristotle had emphasized in his *Politics* that “the polis consists of a certain multitude” and “not only of a number of people, but of people of different kinds” (1261a). And where Plato’s *Republic* had envisaged the abolition of individual property and a socialization of human reproduction in the name of political unity, Aristotle had protested that “to make the polis too much of a unity is not a better policy” (1261b). If Aristotle was nevertheless not a pluralist in Arendt’s sense that was first and foremost because he held that man is political by nature. On Arendt’s reading this formula excluded a proper appreciation of the fact that politics arises only in between human beings. Aristotle’s recognition that a polis is necessarily constituted of people of different kinds would also have been insufficient for Arendt. Her kind of pluralism postulates, rather, “that the world opens up differently to every man, according to his position in it,” that “every man has his own *doxa*, his own opening to the world,” and that when men talk together from their different standpoints, they articulate a common world and also define themselves and their own positions more clearly.¹⁰ According to this conception, the outstanding virtue of the statesman is not a unique grasp of the

⁶ M. Canovan. *Hannah Arendt: A Re-Interpretation of her Political Thought* (New York 1992), p. 281.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ DT, p. 232 where she criticizes Plato on grounds put forward in Aristotle’s *Politics*.

⁹ Plato, *Republic*, 462a.

¹⁰ H. Arendt, ‘Philosophy and Politics’, *Social Research*, 57 (1990), pp. 80, 81.

idea of the good or of the ideal of political justice but “consists in understanding the greatest possible number and variety of realities – not of subjective viewpoints, which of course also exist but which do not concern us here – as those realities open themselves up to the various opinions of citizens; and, at the same time, in being able to communicate between the citizens and their opinions so that the common-ness of this world becomes apparent”.¹¹ Where Aristotle recognized that a polis will necessarily contain people who are objectively of different kind, Arendt’s pluralism requires human beings with a plurality of understandings of their reality.

In trying to assess Arendt’s take on the pluralism of the political it is still more illuminating to contrast it to Schmitt’s concern with pluralism. It was after all in renewing his question “what is politics?” that she turned herself into a political theorist and it was in trying to answer this question that she came up with the conclusion that politics rests on the fact of human plurality. In relating Arendt and Schmitt in this manner we must, however, keep in mind that their real and substantive affinities are always qualified by equally real and substantial disagreements. We need to avoid, therefore, both Martin Jay’s view that Arendt uncritically accepted Schmitt’s decisionism and Dana Villa’s counter-claim that she can in no way be put in Schmitt’s company.¹² Careful scrutiny reveals that Arendt was certainly familiar with many of Schmitt’s writings and that she regarded him highly as an outstanding scholar, a jurist with ingenious theories, and a most able defender of his views. But we must not overlook her constant qualifications of such praise. Schmitt was for her an outstanding scholar but one who did his “utmost to supply the Nazis with ideas and techniques”.¹³ He was a jurist “whose very ingenious theories about the end of democracy and legal government still make arresting reading” – even if his conclusions need to be rejected.¹⁴ He was “the most able defender of the notion of sovereignty” – a doctrine that must be utterly resisted.¹⁵ Despite such qualifications, we cannot fail to notice that references and allusions to Schmitt are strewn throughout Arendt’s work. In her essay *What is Existenz Philosophy?* of 1946 she drew, for instance, on Schmitt’s *Political Theology* in arguing that we must take the word “existential” to mean “what Kierkegaard illustrated in the category of the exception”.¹⁶ In the same essay she used Schmitt’s *Political Romanticism* to criticize the political Heidegger as “really (let us hope) the last Romantic – an immensely talented Friedrich Schlegel or Adam Müller, as it were, whose complete lack of responsibility is attributable to a spiritual playfulness that stems in part from delusions of genius and in part from despair”.¹⁷ Later on, in *The Human Condition* she relied on

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

¹² For the first claim see M. Jay, *Permanent Exiles* (New York 1985), pp. 240–242, and for the second D. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger* (Princeton 1996), p. 115.

¹³ H. Arendt, *The Image of Hell*, reprinted in *Essays in Understanding* (New York 1994), p. 201.

¹⁴ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York 1973), p. 339, note 65.

¹⁵ H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York 1993), p. 296, note 21.

¹⁶ H. Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 174.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 187, note 2.

Schmitt's *Nomos der Erde* in characterizing law as being originally the boundary line between households. Following Schmitt almost word for word she explained that "the Greek word for law, *nomos*, derives from *nemein*, which means to distribute, to possess (what has been distributed), and to dwell." And in a further allusion to Schmitt she characterized politics as a hedging of conflict and the public realm as something that cannot exist "without a fence to hedge it in".¹⁸

Arendt agreed specifically with Schmitt's critique of the normativist tradition in political philosophy. Both called, instead, for giving priority to the analysis of political concepts. Arendt's concern became thus, as she put it in 1959, to provide a "critical examination of the chief traditional concepts and conceptual frameworks of political thinking" and to engage in a "more systematic examination of those spheres of the world and human life which we properly call political".¹⁹ Her goal was not, of course, a purely formal analysis of the concepts in question but, as she also wrote in 1959, to examine "the concrete historical and generally political experiences" which gave rise to those concepts since "the experiences behind even the most worn-out concept remain valid and must be recaptured and re-actualized if one wishes to escape certain generalizations that have proved pernicious".²⁰ This required in turn, she added, an exploration of "the various modi of human plurality and the institutions which correspond to them." Her methodology in analyzing concepts was thus to be historical and critical in tone and always driven by practical and political ends. In all these respects, her work recalls identifiable motivations in Schmitt's analyses of political concepts.

Arendt shares in particular Schmitt's concern with the concept of the political. Like Schmitt, she asks: "What is it in the human condition that makes politics possible and necessary?" – as she put it in 1959 in summary of a projected book on political philosophy (DT, p. 523). I want to argue here that the roots of her concern with the pluralism of the political can be traced back her critical discussion of Schmitt's 1934 essay *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*.²¹ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Arendt agrees in essence with Schmitt's diagnosis that the political movement (National Socialist, fascist, or communist) is the decisively new phenomenon of twentieth century politics and that the political movement has replaced the parliamentary party system of the nineteenth-century nation-state. She commences her account of this transition in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in fact, with a quotation from Schmitt's essay and she concludes it with another quotation from that essay according to which "the Movement [...] is State as well as People, and neither the present state [...] nor the present German people can even be conceived without the Movement".²² Characteristic for the movement, so conceived, Arendt comments, is its lack of concern with political platforms and programs. "For the only thing that counts in a movement is precisely that it keeps

¹⁸ H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago 1958), pp. 63, 64.

¹⁹ This and the following quotations are taken from E. Young-Bruehl's biography *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (Binghamton 1982), pp. 325–326.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ C. Schmitt, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk: Die Dreigliederung der politischen Einheit* (Hamburg 1935) (hereafter cited as "SBV").

²² H. Arendt, *The Origins*, pp. 251, 266.

itself in constant movement".²³ She writes of totalitarianism accordingly as a system "where the essence of government itself has become motion" and where "all laws have become laws of movement".²⁴ This development leads, so she thinks, to an undermining of all political institutions, the eventual destruction of the entire public-political sphere, and "the total elimination of spontaneity itself, that is of the most general and most elementary manifestation of human freedom, at which only totalitarian regimes aim".²⁵ Given such radical outcomes, Arendt concludes that totalitarianism must be distinguished from all previous forms of government and thus from both traditional form of authoritarianism with its restriction of freedom and from traditional forms of tyranny and dictatorship with their abolition of political freedom.

Arendt agrees, thus, with Schmitt's thesis in *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* that we are faced with a new model of political organization "characteristic for the state of the twentieth century" which is implemented in different forms in Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union (SBV, p. 13). Schmitt had anticipated this development in writings from the pre-Nazi period when he had spoken of a historical transformation of our entire social reality whose outcome was an inevitable intermingling of society and politics, a loss of identity of the traditional political institutions, and increasing confusion about the distinctive meaning of the political. "This awesome transformation may be constructed as part of a dialectical evolution which runs through three stages," he had written in 1931, "from the absolutist state of the 17th and 18th centuries, though the neutral state of the liberal 19th century, to the total state of the identity of state and society".²⁶ Schmitt thus characterized the new kind of state with a term he had adapted from E. Jünger's notion of "total mobilization" (WTS, p. 173). It is here then in Schmitt's work where we find the roots of Arendt's totalitarianism thesis according to which National Socialism and Soviet Communism are varying expressions of the same historical phenomenon.

For Schmitt this development created at the same time an urgent new problematic. Like Arendt, he was convinced of the pluralistic character of the human condition. "The world of the objective spirit," he had told the Kant Society in 1929, "is a pluralistic world: pluralism of races and nations, of religions and cultures, of languages and legal systems".²⁷ The political world, too, he had added, was inherently pluralistic in that it required always the existence of various competing political entities. And the state itself was also internally "always complex and in a certain sense in itself pluralistic".²⁸ But at the same time Schmitt was keenly aware of a need for political unity. He rejected, therefore, the "pluralistic

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 260.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 463, 466.

²⁵ H. Arendt, *What is Authority?*, [in:] H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (Harmondsworth 1993), p. 96 (hereafter cited as "WA").

²⁶ C. Schmitt, *Die Wendung zum totalen Staate*, [in:] C. Schmitt, *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles. 1923-1939* (Berlin 1994), p. 173 (hereafter cited as "WTS").

²⁷ C. Schmitt, *Staatsethik und pluralistischer Staat*, [in:] *Positionen...*, p. 160.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

theory of the state” advanced by G.D. Cole and H. Lasky according to which the state is only one among many associations and he stressed instead the overarching need for “the political unity of a people.” Where such unity is absent, he feared, the will of the individual, far from being liberated to its own autonomous needs and interests, would, in fact, be submerged in a plurality of competing obligations and relations of loyalty. The individual would thus become the plaything of competing social groupings and interests. Such confusions could be overcome only when the state in its unity provides a “concrete order” and framework for the contending social forces. In the 1931 essay *The turn toward the total state* he had written accordingly: “The state is now, as one says, the self-organization of society, but the question is how this self-organizing society achieves *unity* and whether this unity appears real as the result of ‘self-organization’” (WTS, p. 176). And this question, he thought, was thus “the most difficult question of contemporary constitutional law” (WTS, p. 178).

In the writings that follow Schmitt concerns himself therefore again and again with what he perceives to be the perils of a political pluralism. In *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* he denounces political liberalism accordingly for promoting forms pluralism that can lead only to “antithetical ruptures” (SBV, p. 16) and to the “the destruction or at least the relativizing of the political whole” (SBV, p. 12). He inveighs equally against multi-party democracy since in such a state “the parties that oppose each other lack any unifying political will and can meet each other at best only at a political null-point” (SBV, p. 9, footnote). This kind of state, he believes, must end in an “anarchic pluralism of social forces” (SBV, p. 27). He opposes in addition any form of federalism, he insists finally even on the need for a racial homogeneity of the state and its population. While the state of old had been built on various sorts of unstable bi-partite divisions, such as the king and the people, or alternatively the state and the individual, the new total state had to be tri-partite in organization, if it was to succeed in maintaining a balance between the conflicting demands of pluralism and unity. As long as different elements of the state stand dualistically opposed to each other, as they still do in the liberal system, the resulting structure would always be unstable. A third, mediating element was required to bind the other two together into a real unity. Schmitt proposes a new German state built out of three complementary systems: (1) the old administrative, bureaucratic, and military apparatus, (2) the Party or movement with its hierarchical order, and (3) the people with their traditional civic and social organizations. In Schmitt’s words: “Each of the three words: state, movement, people can be used for the whole of the political unit. Each refers at the same time to a specific aspect and a specific element of the whole. Thus, we may look at the state in the narrower sense as the political and static part, the movement as the political and dynamic element, and the people as the un-political aspect which flourishes under the protection and in the shadow of the political decisions” (SBV, p. 12). Drawing on essentially theological considerations, Schmitt thus seeks to give the new total state a Trinitarian structure. Where the traditional state may be considered to play the role of God the Father and the people that of the Son, the political movement (of the Nazi, fascist, or communist type) is meant now to

take the place of the Holy Spirit in uniting the two. It should not surprise us that Schmitt finds the roots of this conception in “the great tradition of German thinking on the state that was inaugurated by Hegel,” since Hegel’s dialectic is itself, of course, indebted to the Trinitarian schemata of Christian theology (SBV, p. 13).

In describing the structure of the new German total state, Schmitt sought to maintain a fine balance between the reality of the pluralism of human life and the need for political unity. If the unity of the state demanded now a leader capable of making sovereign decisions, his leadership (*Führertum*) was at the same time meant to be strictly distinct from “commanding, dictating, from centralizing-bureaucratic governing or any other kind of arbitrary domination” (SBV, p. 41). While it was the task of the political movement to hold the people and the state apparatus together, Schmitt recognized, of course, also that the Nazi party consisted concretely once again of a plurality of formations. Hence, he considered it necessary that there should be a hierarchical order within the party at whose head stood the leader whose decisions must be irrevocable and final. Schmitt declared, indeed, that “the strength of the National Socialist state lies in the fact that from the top to the bottom and in every particle of its existence it is dominated and pervaded by the thought of leadership” (SBV, p. 33). But he understood at the same time that this hierarchical order might disturb once again the balance between the natural pluralism of the political and the need for political unity. He proposed therefore a “leadership council [*Führerrat*]” that was to provide the leader with “advice, suggestions, and reports” (SBV, p. 35). But for the sake of political unity this council could not be elected but would have to be, in turn, appointed by the leader in order to preserve the unity of the system. Schmitt suggested as a model the “imaginative and paradigmatic form” of the Prussian State Council – “that great constructive work of the Prussian Prime Minister Göring” – of which he himself was a founding member and as which he also signed his 1934 essay (SBV, p. 36). But this still left the question what constraints there could be for preventing the leader from becoming a mere dictator. Schmitt found a final and most disturbing answer in “the unconditional rational identity between the leader and his followers.” But such identity demanded, in turn, a “homogeneity” in the people – i.e., an identity in their form of life and, presumably, also in their racial make-up.

Political unity, it appeared, could be assured only by abolishing or minimizing human plurality. It is clear in retrospect that Schmitt had failed to solve the problem of the balance between plurality and unity. His proposals for the Nazi state remained, in any case, without echo. The *Führerrat* never came into being and those in power evinced no interest in the triadic form of the state that Schmitt was envisaging. If we follow Arendt’s distinction between authoritarian government, tyranny or dictatorship, and totalitarianism, we must conclude that Schmitt’s was attempting to put the Nazi state on an authoritarian footing and that he was thus thoroughly out of tune with the totalitarian tendencies of a regime that believed only in the unconstrained power of the *Führer* and the absolutely dominating role of the Nazi movement. Schmitt’s essay tells us thus in the end less about National

Socialism than about his own struggle with the demands of pluralism and political unity. That struggle had had its roots, no doubt, in Schmitt's experience with the divisions of the Weimar Republic between monarchists and republicans, landed conservatives and industrial liberals, between the extreme left and the extreme right, divisions that made regular government in the end impossible and put impassable obstacles in the way of solving the economic and social problems of post war Germany.

Arendt, who was twenty years younger than Schmitt, grew up in that same disturbed and disturbing political climate. But her own political experience took her thinking about politics in a very different direction. As a Jew in Germany, as a stateless person in Paris, and finally as a European in New York, Arendt found herself confronted in ever new ways with the fact of human plurality. These experiences made her aware that we as modern humans can live together politically only if we accept our plurality and learn to treat it not as a problem to be overcome but as an opportunity to be exploited. In her diary she spoke of "the fundamental problem of all political philosophy in the West" as the question "how one can make a singularity out of a plurality," to which, she added, Rousseau had given "perhaps the most murderous solution" (DT, p. 242). In a skeptical tone she called the various theoretical efforts to solve this problem attempts at squaring the circle and thus as essentially futile. She never explicitly addressed Schmitt's attempts to deal with it. She spoke, however, already in her seminal note on "what is politics?" of Hobbes – to whom Schmitt considered itself so close – as the only significant political thinker who had understood the plurality of the human condition (DT, p. 17). But he had done so, as she noted somewhat later, only by "disempowering all in favor of one," and thus had resolved the problem of human plurality only in a negative fashion (DT, p. 81).

Arendt never concerned herself with the question of political unity in the same sustained manner as Schmitt. Her most detailed examination of the issue is perhaps to be found in her essay *What is Authority?* She describes there what she considers to have been the Roman understanding of politics as based on the "trinity of religion, tradition, and authority" (WA, p. 140). The resulting authoritarian form of government, she argued, is one typically bound by laws. "Its acts are tested by a code which was made either not by man at all, as in the case of the law of nature or God's commandments or the Platonic ideas, or at least not by those actually in power" – as for instance the founders of the state or the ancestors. "The source of authority in authoritarian government is always a force external and superior to its own power" (WA, p. 97). The appropriate image for authoritarian government, Arendt suggests, is the pyramid – a structure rising from and resting firmly on some external foundation. Authority understood in this way, provides "permanence and durability" to the public-political realm, it constructs a "groundwork" for our "Protean universe;" it offers "permanence and reliability" (WA, p. 95). And in doing so it lends our political institutions their identity and unity. But Arendt is, of course, by no means committed to the authoritarian form of politics. She wants to convince us, rather, that "authority has vanished from the modern world" (WA, p. 91) – which does not signal for her the end of

politics, only the end of one variety of it. It forces us, however, so she concludes, to confront anew “without the religious trust in the sacred beginning and without the protection of traditional and therefore self-evident standards of behavior, [...] the elementary problems of human living-together” (WA, p. 141). In *What is Authority?* Arendt remains silent on the question what this living-together will look like, what coherence, what permanence, what reliability, what unity it will have.

Elsewhere she speaks of “acting in concert” as the distinctive characteristic of politics. “Power,” she writes in her essay *On Violence*, “corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of someone that he is ‘in power’ we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name. The moment the group from which the power originated to begin with [...] disappears, ‘his power’ also vanishes”.²⁹ And in *On Revolution* she writes in a similar sense: “In distinction to strength [...] power comes into being only if and when men join themselves together for the purpose of action, and it will disappear when, for whatever reason, they disperse and desert one another. Hence, binding and promising, combining and covenanting are the means by which power is kept in existence; where and when men succeed in keeping intact the power which sprang up between them during the course of any particular act or deed, they are already in the process of foundation, of constituting a stable worldly structure to house, as it were, their combined power of action”.³⁰ While these passages are suggestive, they also reveal that Arendt was little concerned with explaining how human beings actually succeeded in the endeavor of acting in concert, how they managed to keep together in groups, how they joined themselves together and under what conditions they might disperse, how binding and promising helped to maintain acting in concert, how a stable, worldly structure was founded and kept intact. She thus never fully addressed the worry that propelled Schmitt: how in an increasingly pluralistic world there could still be unifying political structures, how concerted political action was possible under conditions of ever growing diversity. Both Arendt and Schmitt were familiar with the problem from having lived through the last turbulent days of the Weimar Republic at a time when no government could keep itself in power for long, when no consensus seemed possible anymore on the measures that needed to be taken to save the state and the economy, when the political parties were becoming more and more extreme and more unyielding in their demands, when civil war was raging in the streets. Such experiences motivated Schmitt to call for an authoritarian order in which political decisions are laid in the hands of a sovereign leader. Arendt, on the other hand, was putting her hopes on the power of concerted action, on the capacity of plural men to overcome their differences.

Where Schmitt (like Hobbes) perceived human plurality as something to be constrained, Arendt continued to think of it as opening up the possibility for

²⁹ H. Arendt, *On Violence* (New York 1970), p. 44.

³⁰ H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York 1963), p. 174.

exchange and communication across the abyss of difference that divides us, and as the positive condition of all things political. To the question “what is politics?” her initial response had been that politics “rests on the fact of the plurality of human beings” and that human beings “organize themselves politically [...] out of an absolute chaos of difference.” And from this idea she did not diverge later on. In *The Human Condition* she wrote of plurality accordingly as “the condition [...] of all political life” (HC, p. 7) This plurality meant paradoxically that “we are all the same, that is human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live” (HC, p. 8) Such plurality manifested itself for Arendt first and foremost in human action. Already in the note *What is politics?* she had connected the idea of plurality to two further claims that were to remain important for her entire subsequent thinking. The first was that politics is an arena in which we can and must be “genuinely free” and “neither driven by ourselves nor dependent on given material,” and that the political domain owes its reality to free human creation. The second claim was that politics organizes “that which is at first absolutely different in respect of a relative equality” and that it creates in this way “a voluntary guarantee and recognition of a legally equal claim” for everyone. Human equality is, in other words, not a given at the outset of the political process, it does not consist in the possession of an innate and inalienable right, but is a political achievement.

In asserting the primacy of action in politics we can see Arendt once again as close to Schmitt. But their different assessments of the pluralism of the political led them to disagree very deeply over the exact nature of political action. For Schmitt the paradigmatic political action is the activity of decision-making and the primary political act is for him the one by which we initially distinguish between political friend and political enemy. It is by means of such acts that, according to Schmitt, the whole machinery of our political institutions is ultimately set in motion. What makes an action political for Schmitt is the formal characteristic that it serves to discriminate; its political character determines, however, the basis on which distinguish between friend and enemy is made. That may, indeed, vary from one historical context to another. Schmitt’s characterization of the political is thus, we might, formalistic in character in contrast to Arendt which has precisely a substantive meaning.³¹ And formally speaking, a political act is for Schmitt most fundamentally an act by which we assure political unity in a pluralistic universe. But the same act that is meant to establish the internal unity of the state also affirms once more the pluralistic character of the political. For whatever the internal unity of a state will be, it is defined externally by a distinction between us and the existentially other, and this friend-enemy division acknowledges thus the inevitably pluralistic structure of the political space. Arendt, by contrast, is nowhere concerned with such a pluralism of foreign politics. She thinks about political action as the interaction of those within the public, political realm. Such action aims for her at self-disclosure, it is communicative in nature and in it the parties strive to interpret themselves, their differentiated positions in the world,

³¹ In *Staatsethik und pluralistischer Staat* Schmitt castigates “the persistent error that the political signifies a substance of its own” (p. 159).

and each other. Political action is thus a direct realization of human plurality. Arendt would surely have rejected Schmitt's characterization of political action (if she had ever addressed the topic) as insufficiently cognizant of the pluralism of the human condition. There is, we must grant, indeed something one-directional Schmitt's acts of decision-making. Such acts treat others always only as objects of action, not as actual participants in an interactive engagement. Where Schmitt's primary political act, thus, separates and discriminates, political action in Arendt's sense is meant to be co-operative and unifying. These distinctions produce, in turn, further differences. The first is that political action contains for Schmitt an essentially antagonistic element whereas for Arendt political action may or may not have an agonistic character, but it is not essentially either. Arendt recognizes, for instance, that ancient Athens was a city "whose life consisted of an intense and uninterrupted contest of all against all." But, in contrast to Schmitt, she believes in the possibility of positive forms of political friendship not built on the division between friend and enemy.³² Arendt's second disagreement with Schmitt's conception of political action is an adjunct of the first. Since political action is for her free interaction with others, there exists for her thus a natural link between freedom and action – an insight which she summarized in the formula that "the *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action".³³ No such inherent connection between freedom and political action is, on the other hand, to be found in Schmitt. The decisive acts of political sovereignty which Schmitt envisages are fully compatible with authoritarian rule and the exercise of dictatorial power.

Schmitt's and Arendt's differing conceptions of political action generate, in turn, two very different views concerning the relation of politics to other productive spheres of human life. For Schmitt economic and productive matters can, like everything else, become the content of politics, though even then they are conceptually distinct from the essence of the political contained for him in the formal structure of the friend-enemy schema. For Arendt, on the other hand, political action is free interaction and as such essentially differentiated from any other activity such as, in particular, human labor and work. As early as July 1950, at the very beginning of her philosophical diary and before she had even penned the note on the nature of the political, Arendt had, in fact, already distinguished political action sharply from production or work, that is, the making of artifacts. "Producing belongs naturally, just as much as acting, to the essence of man," she had written. "But producing is a particular kind of activity whereas acting, like thinking, is life itself" (DT, p. 10) That distinction was to resurface again in *The Human Condition* and now in the tripartite division of labor, work, and action. Labor, Arendt insisted, was the activity that takes care of our vital, recurrent, daily needs. "Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor" (HC, p. 7). As such, it must be distinguished from work which corresponds to

³² H. Arendt, *Philosophy and Politics*, p. 82.

³³ H. Arendt, *What is Freedom?*, [in:] H. Arendt, *Between Past and Future...*, p. 146.

“the unnaturalness of the human condition” and provides us with “an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings” (*ibidem*). Neither of these two activities is, however, to be considered political in character. Only action, understood as the pure, unmediated interaction of human beings, is political in character. “Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things,” Arendt wrote in the *Human Condition*, “corresponds to the human condition of plurality [...] While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically the condition [...] of all political life”.³⁴

Much of *The Human Condition* was devoted to drawing out the consequences of this division of human activities. Both labor and work she recognized, of course, to be constituent elements of the human condition. But labor was for her most obviously a matter of necessity and was therefore intrinsically different from the pursuit of political freedom. Work, too, was a different matter from politics. To regard politics as a creative art and the state or government as “a kind of collective masterpiece” was, indeed, a “common error”.³⁵ Still, work had for her a more direct relation to politics than labor. For action on its own, she recognized, was a precarious and problematic thing. Human beings needed, in fact, an organized space in which to act, a world, a public domain in order to act freely and politically. This public realm had the function, at the same time, of gathering human beings together and of separating them at the same time, and thus served to maintain human plurality. It was human work, the fabrication of human hands that created such a space and work was thus instrumental in making genuine and unmediated political action possible. It is possible to see here once more certain affinities between Arendt and Schmitt. For Schmitt political order is made necessary because of the uncertainty of our pre-political relations. The possibility of uncontrolled conflicts forces us to establish political distinctions, borders, and boundaries. For both Arendt and Schmitt political action was haunted by uncertainty and this necessitated its containment in an established order. But the uncertainties surrounding action were of course not necessarily the same for them and hence the kind of order and political unity they envisaged were also different.

Schmitt’s and Arendt’s thinking about politics and political action certainly differed profoundly, but their motivations for asking the question what politics is or how we should think about the concept of the political were much the same. They both saw the possibility that politics might disappear altogether from the world and they both conceived this possibility as catastrophic. Schmitt thought of the history of modern Europe as a process of increasing disillusionment with politics, of a growing de-politicization of all spheres of human life, and of the emergence of a technological state of mind that promised relief from the agonistic character of human politics. Arendt couched her story in terms of the distinction between labor, work and action. In a somewhat idealizing fashion, she saw the classical Greek polis as the paradigmatic – and possibly the only – embodiment of a genuine politics in which human beings interacted freely in the public space of

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ H. Arendt, *What is Freedom?*, p. 153.

the agora. In the Greek polis, she argued, labor and work had been relegated to the household while the public domain was reserved for action. But even in this privileged place the possibility of genuine political action had been endangered. The philosophers from Plato and Aristotle onwards had argued that legislating and the execution of decisions by vote were the most legitimate political activities because in them men “act like craftsmen.” This was, however, “no longer or, rather, not yet action (*praxis*), properly speaking, but making (*poiesis*),” Arendt comments, which the philosophers preferred because of its greater reliability. It was as though they had said, “if men only renounce their capacity for action, with its futility, boundlessness, and uncertainty of outcome, there could be a remedy for the frailty of human affairs” (HC, p. 195). Arendt discovered, thus, in Plato a turning-point in man’s relation to himself and to the world. Genuine politics had actually come to be endangered with the rise of political philosophy. In 1954 Arendt spoke memorably of “Plato’s despair of polis life” as a result of the death of Socrates at the hand of his fellow citizens.³⁶ Political philosophy had thus emerged at a moment of alienation from politics. Plato had concluded that politics could only be judged by means of philosophically grounded, non-political standards. But since actual politics could never conform to such standards, the philosophers had eventually been led to think of politics as an unethical business and as something reflecting only the wickedness of human nature. Plato’s critique of political praxis, his belief in the power of *poiesis*, and his profound desire to substitute the certainties of the ideas for the uncertainties of ordinary opinion had constituted thus the beginning of a process that has ended in modern technology, in modern bureaucratic society, and the totalitarian state, conditions in which the desire for genuine political self-realization, for freedom and action and thus the acceptance of human plurality are overwhelmed by the productive urge.

The final stages of this process could, however, be understood only if one saw also that with the rise of modernity human beings had increasingly come to conceive of themselves as laboring animals. The philosophers had once sought to replace action by work but the modern age had, in turn, replaced work by labor. This development was most evident in the thought of Karl Marx. The process had led to the dissolution of the distinction between the sphere of the household, where labor and work had their proper place, and the public realm in which political action was possible. A new formation had emerged, society, which had “an irresistible tendency to grow, to devour the political and the private” (HC, p. 45). There was for Arendt “conformism inherent in every society” which “excludes the possibility of action” and hence of politics. “Behavior” had, indeed, now “replaced action as the foremost mode of human relationship” (HC, pp. 39, 40, and 41). The result was “conformism, behaviorism, and automatism in human affairs,” the reduction of state and government to bureaucracy and “pure administration,” the rise of “mass society” and the “rule of nobody” – a process that involved human “leveling” and “can at the same time threaten humanity with extinction” (HC, pp. 43, 45, and 46).

³⁶ H. Arendt, *Philosophy and Politics*, p. 73.

Schmitt was perhaps not as pessimistic about the future of politics as Arendt. He had, indeed, concluded *The Concept of the Political* on the hopeful note that state and politics will not be abolished. But he, too, was anxious over the rise of a purely technological culture and like Arendt saw the possibility of a genuine politics endangered. Such overlapping agreements and disagreements remind us that Schmitt and Arendt belonged more or less to the same time and came more or less from the same culture and that they struggled in consequence with similar questions. Both concerned themselves, in particular, with the question how politics should be understood not for reasons of scholastic clarification but because they saw our political world coming apart. For Schmitt the problem presented itself in form of the question how political unity could be maintained in the midst of an increasingly pluralistic struggle of interests and ideas. Arendt hoped to bring us back to a political form of existence by reminding us of the value of human plurality and the possibility of coming together in our differences. In retrospect it appears that neither of them may have resolved the conundrums that concerned them. Faced with the rifts and conflicts generated by human plurality, Schmitt sought refuge in the idea of political unity; appalled by the potential for totalitarian oppression Arendt strove to conceive of politics in terms of plurality. Is there a stable mid-point between the demands of human plurality and political unity? We still do not know.

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**Leo Strauss's Utopia of "Return"
as an Anti-Modern Anti-Utopia***

Abstract

This paper deals with Leo Strauss's "recipe" for overcoming the present crisis of the West which consist, in his opinion, in its losing faith in its own ideals and values and follows from our inability of their metaphysical grounding. My aim is to identify and discuss the most characteristic and, I think, highly original elements of this project: the diagnosis that the general crisis of our civilization is closely connected with the crisis of political philosophy which, in turn, results from the revolutionary changes that were initiated by the founders of its modern version; the call for the "return" to the *philosophical* idea of natural law; Strauss's declaration that the essential feature of this idea (and of each authentic philosophy) is its anti-dogmatism which stands in opposition both to the dogmatism of religion and to some fundamental dogmas of modern politics.

In his essay *What is political philosophy?* Leo Strauss writes about the "three waves of modernity", marking three consecutive epochs which form the stages of a deepening crisis. The last of them, the one in which we still live, was inaugurated by Nietzsche.¹ This is the era in which the crisis of the West and modernity becomes almost obvious because Western modernity, having lost faith in its essential values and ideals, ceases to believe in itself – in its own meaning and purpose. In Nietzsche's thought, says Strauss, we find perhaps the most acute awareness of that situation. Its thorough analysis helps therefore to diagnose the fundamental causes of the current crisis and reveals that they are closely connected with our specific attitude towards reality – an attitude that comprises of our understanding, valuations and expectations: "He [Nietzsche] tried to articulate his understanding both of the modern situation and of human life as such, by his doctrine of the

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 4 [1] (2009), pp. 77–94.

¹ L. Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy*, [in:] L. Strauss, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: ten essays by Leo Strauss* (Detroit 1989), p. 56.

'will to power'. The difficulty inherent in the philosophy of the will to power led, after Nietzsche, to the explicit renunciation of the very notion of eternity. Modern thought reaches its culmination, its highest self-consciousness, in the most radical historicism, i.e. in explicitly condemning to oblivion the notion of eternity. For oblivion of eternity, or, in other words, estrangement from man's deepest desire and therewith from the primary issues, is the price which modern man had to pay, from the very beginning, for attempting to be absolutely sovereign, to become the master and owner of nature, to conquer chance".²

The current crisis of the West results from the situation where the metaphysical grounding and justification of our fundamental ideals and principles is no longer possible. When Strauss speaks of the "oblivion of eternity", he means, among other things, that for the modern man, there is no point of reference that would give his aims and rules universal validity. Modernity ends in historicism and relativism³. According to Strauss, these two came about as a necessary result of a project which constitutes the western modernity. It was based on the above-mentioned fundamental belief that man can and ought to become the master of his own nature and absolute sovereign, and assumed that the most important goal for such a man is to build a universal society in which free and equal people enjoy common prosperity and hence universal justice and happiness.

Strauss points out that this goal became ours (the people of the West) only in modern times, when it was formulated within political philosophy. This observation leads him to conclude that the general crisis of the West is closely related to the crisis of this particular philosophical discipline, which is in turn the result of the revolutionary changes initiated by the creators of modern political philosophy who recognized that the construction of a new science of politics should start from the break with all previous tradition. This diagnosis makes Strauss declare that we should go back.⁴ Return is then the adequate answer to the failure – or perhaps success? – of the modern utopia. But in trying to execute this solution we should be aware that the simple reproduction of the past – without taking into account the changes that have taken place in us and in the world until now – is impossible. And we need to know to where we should return, to which of the main strands of our complex. Strauss also emphasizes that the reform of political philosophy (the attempt to support it on the new, but already previously known, rules) means necessarily the reform of the whole. This is because political philosophy – which, according to him, deals with "mankind's great objectives, freedom and government or empire – objectives which are capable of lifting all men beyond their poor selves"⁵ – is part of philosophy, and philosophy "means quest for knowledge of

² *Ibidem*, p. 57.

³ "Nietzsche is the philosopher of relativism: the first thinker who faced the problem of relativism in its full extent and pointed to the way in which relativism can be overcome. Relativism came to Nietzsche's attention in the form of historicism – more precisely, in the form of a decayed Hegelianism". L. Strauss, *Relativism*, [in:] L. Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism. An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss* (Chicago–London 1989), p. 24.

⁴ L. Strauss, 'Progress or return. The contemporary crisis in Western civilization', *Modern Judaism*, 1 (1981), p. 33.

⁵ L. Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy...*, p. 4.

God, the world, and man – or rather quest for knowledge of the natures of all things: the natures in their totality are »the whole«”.⁶

I

The goal which is fundamental to modernity (and founding modernity), that man should master chance and thus become the absolute sovereign, was first formulated by Machiavelli. His is the rule which has been taken over by almost all his modern successors, and which can be summarized as follows: “One must lower the standards in order to make probable, if not certain, the realization of the right or desirable social order or in order to conquer the chance; one must effect a shift of emphasis from moral character to institution”.⁷

The postulate that we should lower standards applies, of course, to the classical theory of politics, whose authors proclaimed that the political order should be based on virtue. Pointing to the utopian character of political solutions which place excessive moral demands on citizens, Machiavelli proposes to replace virtue with goals, which most members of society sincerely want to achieve. He is convinced that such substitution will significantly increase the chances of achieving the desired social order. It requires, however, working out an entirely new approach to the functions of the state: from now on, it should no longer deal with shaping the moral characters of its citizens, but rather create and support institutions that would make the misconduct (harmful to the desired social order) unprofitable to them.

It is a matter of great importance, says Strauss, that the aforementioned re-formulation of political goals required more or less conscious departure from the prevailing views on the nature of reality and the nature of humans. Revolutionary modern thinkers discarded the classical view that man is a teleological being, directed by nature towards his own excellence or virtue. Releasing man from the goals set by nature, they could begin to describe him as a being with multiple possibilities, able to set up for himself almost any aim, and much stronger and more sovereign in relation to nature than the ancients believed.

But Machiavelli's project, says Strauss, was too revolutionary and had to be modified if its basic principle were to succeed. This modification is carried out by Hobbes and Locke who return to the classical principle which says that justice is not merely a product of society, but is based on natural law. What they offer, however, is a completely new version of natural law, radically different from the classical one. It is derived from man's strongest passion (fear of death) and not, as was the case with all the previous versions – from his reason and goal (*telos*). At the same time, Hobbes and Locke fully support Machiavelli's criticism of classic political philosophy and his demand for lowering standards in order to make more probable the attainment of the desired social order.⁸ This combination, soothing the revolutionary tone of Machiavelli's project, has resulted in (in its mature form

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 48–51.

in Locke, who "in the Anglo-Saxon world" had "resounding success, especially as contrasted with the apparent failure of Hobbes") the transformation of greed into "amoral substitute for morality", which in turn would allow "the solution of the political problem by economic means".

It didn't take long, however, that these strongly anti-classical concepts of morality and politics, together with the concept of man as a greedy egoist that lies at their basis, aroused passionate opposition, initiating "the second wave of modernity" which "bore both German idealistic philosophy and the romanticism of all ranks in all countries".⁹ This wave begins with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although he wants to get back from the modern state which is built on greed, to the classical city, based on virtue, his attempt to return turns out to be the first step towards that form of modernity, "which was still more alien to classical thought than the thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been".¹⁰ Rousseau finds impossible and needless what Hobbes and Locke thought necessary: the appeal to natural law in the construction of civil society. For him, the only source of rules being in force in such a society can and must be the general will, that is the will of a free society, which cannot be wrong and thanks to this infallibility replaces transcendent natural law.¹¹

Rousseau's thinking comes to the final break with the concept of nature as a source and model for the socio-political rights and principles. It should be noted, however, that this break is necessarily accompanied by the new vision of humanity (human nature), significantly different from both the classical one and that which was formulated by the initiators of the first wave of modernity. Rousseau agrees with Hobbes's claim that man is not by nature a social being. But, since he complements this position with the observation that speech and reason are the products of society, he must derive from it the conclusion that Hobbes didn't: he has to admit that man is by nature the "pre-rational" being. This understanding of our humanity, says Strauss, leads to the conclusion that, strictly speaking, man has no fixed nature, that, in other words, man is by nature able to self-improve in an unlimited way.¹² The shape of his own existence and the shape of society depend therefore almost entirely on him.

Rousseau made man free of nature and thus turned him into a thoroughly historical being. This is why the founders of German idealism could hope that the realization of the right social order, equivalent to the solution of the conflict between culture and nature, would become possible through history.¹³ Strauss points out that although the idealistic philosophy opposed the degradation caused by the first wave of modernity, claiming that the implementation of the right order is necessary and unintended by human's "result of blind selfish passion", it wasn't able to diminish the realistic trend towards lowering standards.¹⁴

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago 1965), pp. 252–294.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ L. Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?*, pp. 55–56.

Nietzsche's thought, launching the third wave of modernity, is decidedly historicist, but strongly opposes the claim that historical process is rational and is directed towards some end. Nor does the author of the *Beyond Good and Evil* think it ever is possible to reconcile the exceptional human beings (representing, for him, the humanity at its peak) with the state based on modern principles. This is why he calls on the outstanding individuals to self-determine themselves, to stamp their own will on the randomness of nature. This is how, in Nietzsche's radical historicism, it comes to the final break of man's bonds with nature and oblivion of eternity.

If, therefore, today we really have to deal with a crisis – and Strauss argues that we have – it is also the metaphysical one. One could even say that of all forms of the current crisis, this is the most fundamental; because, since the degradation of other areas of human existence and activity – first of all, moral and political ones – is largely due to the lack of metaphysical grounding and, thus, justification of the values and rules operating within them. The analysis of this relationship can prove to be very helpful in diagnosing the current situation and condition of man, and, if that diagnosis turns out to be inauspicious, in formulating the proposals for renewal or change.

Strauss, like Nietzsche, is convinced that the first and necessary step to overcome the crisis is to realize that it has become ours. There are certainly many factors (psychological, moral, political...) that may be hindering this, strengthening people's belief that the values and principles which prevail in their own communities are best for them, the best of all, or even the only real, right and fair. Asking questions about their metaphysical foundation can shake this conviction and initiate critical reflection on what the real basis of this faith is. Faith, being a prerequisite for all values and principles, is not able to survive without a metaphysical basis:

"The need for natural right is as evident today as it has been for centuries and even millennia. To reject natural right is tantamount to saying that all right is positive right, and this means that what is right is determined exclusively by the legislators and the courts of the various countries. Now it is obviously meaningful, and sometimes even necessary, to speak of "unjust" laws and "unjust" decisions. In passing such judgments we imply that there is a standard of right and wrong independent of positive right and higher than positive right: a standard with reference to which we are able to judge of positive right. Many people today hold the view that the standard in question is in the best case nothing but the ideal adopted by our society or our "civilization" and embodied in its way of life or its institutions. [...] But the mere fact that we can raise the question of the worth of the ideal of our society shows that there is something in man that is not altogether in slavery to his society, and therefore that we are able, and hence obliged, to look for a standard with reference to which we can judge of the ideal of our own as well as of any other society. That standard cannot be found in the needs of the various societies, for the societies and their parts have many needs that conflict with one another: the problem of priorities arises. This problem cannot be solved in a rational manner if we do not have a standard with reference to which we can

distinguish between genuine needs and fancied needs and discern the hierarchy of the various types of genuine needs. The problem posed by the conflicting needs of society cannot be solved if we do not possess knowledge of natural right".¹⁵

Overcoming the crisis of faith will not be possible if we don't manage to point to the "natural" grounding and justification of the current values and principles, or the new ones. So, when Strauss speaks of the need to "return" to the classical moral-political vision of human perfection, he emphasizes that this vision had a strong foothold in a particular conception of human nature, and this in turn – in the metaphysical understanding of the nature of the whole, with man being a part of it.

II

But the problem with such a return lies in the fact that we don't know exactly to where we should come back. And we don't know because our civilization has two roots which, as Strauss argues, are essentially impossible to reconcile: "We may call these elements [...] Jerusalem and Athens or, to speak in non-metaphorical language, the Bible and Greek philosophy. [...] Each of these two roots of the Western World sets forth one thing as the one thing needful, and the one thing needful proclaimed by the Bible is incompatible, as it is understood by the Bible, with the one thing needful proclaimed by Greek philosophy, as it is understood by Greek philosophy. To put it very simply and therefore somewhat crudely, the one thing needful according to Greek philosophy is the life of autonomous understanding. The one thing needful as spoken by the Bible is the life of obedient love. The harmonisations or synthetisations are possible because Greek philosophy can *use* obedient love in subservient function and the Bible can *use* philosophy as a handmaid; but what is so used in each case rebels such use, and therefore the conflict is really a radical one".¹⁶

The conflict must be radical, because "the one thing needful" according to both the Bible and philosophy, directly indicates what is the best way of life for a man, as a man. Strauss is convinced that in order to understand the nature of this conflict and, thus, the nature of philosophy, we have to return to this primordial conception, according to which philosophy is not so much a discipline of knowledge as a way of life: "Philosophy is meant, and that is the decisive point, not as a set of propositions, a teaching, or even a system, but as a way of life, a life animated by a peculiar passion, the philosophic desire or *eros*, not as an instrument or a department of human self-realization. Philosophy understood as an instrument or as a department is, of course, compatible with every thought of life, and therefore also with the biblical way of life. But this is no longer philosophy in the original sense of the term. This has been greatly obscured, I believe, by the Western development, because philosophy was certainly in the Christian Middle Ages deprived of its character as a way of life and became just a very important compartment".¹⁷

¹⁵ L. Strauss, *Natural Right...*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁶ L. Strauss, *Progress or Return...*, p. 33.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

While it seems quite obvious that autonomous understanding is incompatible with obedient love, it is not at all clear, at least in modern times, why it cannot turn ultimately into a “set of propositions, a teaching, or even a system”. It would seem after all, that if philosophy means love and the search for wisdom, the possession of wisdom should be desired by every philosopher. What other purpose could autonomous understanding have if not to take possession of the truth, fix it into system, and make it into the subject to be taught? If this were the case, the conflict between the Bible and (Greek) philosophy would not only be between two ways of life, but also – between two systems of claims that aspire to the objective truth. But this is not so, says Strauss, and explains why philosophy cannot become a field of knowledge, even the highest one, and why a philosopher would never agree to serve revelation: “Since he [Socrates] realizes the imperfection of human wisdom, it is hard to understand why he does not go from there to divine wisdom. The reason [...] is this: as a philosopher, he refuses assent to anything which is not evident to him, and revelation is for him not more than an unevident, unproven possibility. Confronted with an unproven possibility, he does not reject, he merely suspends judgment. But here a great difficulty arises which one can state as follows: it is impossible to suspend judgment regarding matters of utmost urgency, regarding matters of life and death. Now the question of revelation is evidently of utmost urgency. If there is revelation, unbelief in revelation or disobedience to revelation is fatal. Suspense of judgment regarding revelation would then seem to be impossible. The philosopher who refuses to assent to revelation because it is not evident therewith rejects revelation. But this rejection is unwarranted if revelation is not disproved. Which means to say that the philosopher, when confronted with revelation, seems to be compelled to contradict the very idea of philosophy by rejecting without sufficient grounds. How can we understand that? The philosophic reply can be stated as follows: the question of utmost urgency, the question which does not permit suspense, is the question of how one should live. Now this question is settled for Socrates by the fact that he is a philosopher. As a philosopher, he knows that we are ignorant of the most important things. The ignorance, the evident fact of this ignorance, evidently proves that quest for knowledge of the most important things is the most important thing for us. Philosophy is then evidently the right way of life. This is in addition, according to him, confirmed by the fact that he finds his happiness in acquiring the highest possible degree of clarity which he can acquire. He sees no necessity whatever to assent to something which is not evident to him”.¹⁸

The philosopher rejects revelation, because it is... revelation, something that is accepted on faith and cannot be proven in any way. But this rejection reveals certain traits of philosophy, its defining feature that makes it in a way the right way of life. The philosopher knows, precisely because he is a philosopher, that he doesn't know the answers to the most important questions. He is well aware that this fundamental ignorance is not only an affliction of the philosopher, as a philosopher, but the inherent condition of man, as man. True, what distinguishes

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

a philosopher from other people who are non-philosophers, is knowledge, but this is knowledge of a specific kind: the knowledge of (his own and everyone else's) ignorance. You can also put it another way: where others see clear answers, philosopher sees obvious questions: "Philosophy is quest for knowledge regarding the whole. Being essentially a quest, and not ever being able to become wisdom, as distinguished from philosophy, the problems are always more evident than the solutions. All solutions are questionable".¹⁹ But "the very uncertainty of all solutions, the very ignorance regarding the most important things, makes quest for knowledge the most important thing, and therefore a life devoted to it, the right way of life".²⁰

III

This kind of quest for knowledge has led philosophy to the formulation the doctrine of natural law which was based on the non-egalitarian notion of human nature. In the *Natural Right in History*, Strauss argues that the doctrine grew out of the refutation of hedonistically inspired conventionalism. The classics based their criticism on the statement, derived from considerations about human nature, that "the good is essentially different from the pleasant, that the good is more fundamental than the pleasant".²¹ Their argument referred to the observation that "the different kinds of being seek or enjoying different kinds of pleasure" and that "the order of the wants of a being points back to the natural constitution, to the What, of the being concerned".²² In order to find out what is good for human being, you have to first determine what human nature is. This is because good for each being is the activity that is specific to it, consistent with its nature. The classical view of human nature, providing the basis for the classical concept of natural law, was based on the belief that the order of human "powers" is hierarchical: "In one way or another everyone distinguishes between the body and the soul; and everyone can be forced to admit that he cannot, without contradicting himself, deny that the soul stands higher than the body. That which distinguishes the human soul from the souls of the brutes, that which distinguishes man from the brutes, is speech or reason or understanding. Therefore, the proper work of man consists in living thoughtfully, in understanding, and in thoughtful action. The good life is the life that is in accordance with the natural order of man's being, the life that flows from a well-ordered or healthy soul. The good life simply, is the life in which the requirements of man's natural inclinations are fulfilled in the proper order to the highest possible degree, the life of a man who is awake to the highest possible degree, the life of a man in whose soul nothing lies waste" The good life is the perfection of man's nature. It is the life according to nature. One may therefore call the rules circumscribing the general character of the good life

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ L. Strauss, *Natural Right...*, p. 126.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 126–127.

"the natural law". The life according to nature is the life of human excellence or virtue, the life of "a high-class person", and not the life of pleasure as pleasure".²³

Aristotle believed that the goodness and perfection of each individual depends on his natural dispositions, then on habits and customs, and, finally, on reasoning; with habits and reasoning being strictly dependent upon upbringing. When we take into account each of these individually, let alone all at once, it will be really hard for us to admit the possibility that people are, or even could *ever* be, equal. And significant differences between them would concern not only their achievements (the degree of excellence), but also their aspirations (to be excellent). So, if we identify, as the classics did, the nature of man with his perfection (perfection, we should add, of innate human powers), then we must conclude that equality is neither real, nor a desirable state

The same declared elitism of the classics manifested itself in their views on political issues, which can be clearly seen in their notions of the best (ideal?) regime and their estimations of the chances of its realization: "The classics thought that, owing to the weakness or dependence of human nature, universal happiness is impossible, and therefore they did not dream of fulfillment of History and hence not of a meaning of History. They saw with their mind's eye a society within which that happiness of which human nature is capable would be possible in the highest degree: the society is the best regime. But because they saw how limited man's power is, they held that the actualization of the best regime depends on chance. Modern man, dissatisfied with utopias and scorning them, has tried to find a guarantee for the actualization of the best social order. In order to succeed, or rather in order to be able to believe that he could succeed, he had to lower the goal of man. One form in which this was done was to replace moral virtue by universal recognition, or to replace happiness by the satisfaction deriving from universal recognition".²⁴

Only by replacing the recognition for what is highest in man with the (universal) recognition for that which is common to all, could modern man begin to dream about the end of History. History can – and should, according to the modern man – come to an end when all people will become satisfied with freedom and equal recognition in a state of prosperity. We cannot even imagine such universal satisfaction if we identify the essence of man, which must be realized if he is to attain happiness, with that which is in the highest – and therefore cannot be achieved in the same degree by all people. This is why the dream of the end of the story, is the dream of egalitarians that can be realized only if all men become egalitarians, i.e. if every man could feel fully satisfied with the recognition granted to him by all other men for what is the same in every human being, and is willing to grant such a recognition to all the other men.

According to the classical philosophers, the study of human nature demonstrates that the soul (which is specifically human) is superior to the body. From this, as we recall, they drew the conclusion that the life which is most consistent

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

²⁴ L. Strauss, *Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero*, [in:] L. Strauss, *On Tyranny* (Ithaca 1975), p. 225.

with human nature, and that which is meant for them: good and in accordance with natural law, is the life of virtue or excellence (the most perfect, of course, being the philosophical life, the life dedicated to the search for knowledge). Strauss thinks that the combination of this conception of the natural law with the "Socratic" vision of philosophy (as searching, rather than possessing the truth or wisdom) made it possible to avoid both absolutism and relativism. As the hierarchy of goals follows directly from human nature (describing what is more or less consistent with it, more or less conducive to its development), it remains always and everywhere the same. It can then be the basis of the universally valid norm and obligation: the obligation to act most perfectly in all circumstances. But since we will never be able to know thoroughly all possible circumstances, and because different circumstances call for different actions, the above standard, although generally valid, is not enough to direct our actions. So, when I think of what I should do in a given situation, each time I have to take into account not only which of the universally valid purposes has precedence, but also which one of them is most urgent in any given circumstances.

It could be assumed that due to the previously discussed contradiction between the Bible and philosophy, the concepts of natural law derived from these two sources should be significantly different. Indeed, St. Thomas Aquinas can proclaim that the moral principles guiding our actions are unchangeable and independent of circumstances, since he assumes that the "the natural end of man is insufficient or points beyond itself":²⁵ to the supernatural goal. For the pagan philosophers, the highest human goals were political activity and, even more perfect, philosophical inquiry. But since these were natural goals and since human nature and natural human knowledge are not and cannot be divine, practicing them could never guarantee the ultimate fulfilment and was never conducted according to the indications of absolutely certain knowledge (because even the highest knowledge was rather the knowledge of questions rather than the knowledge of answers). The Christian knowledge, in turn, does not leave room for doubt here. Consistent with human nature, the supernatural human goal points directly to the Creator and Lawgiver, who gives us directly the knowledge of how we should live and act, requiring from us not an autonomous reasoning, but *obedience*.

IV

When we look for the foundation of natural law in the goals of man – whether natural or supernatural – the proper object of the obligations imposed by these laws will always be human perfection. The fulfillment of these obligations is to enable us to move from the current state of being to the one which we must achieve in order to fully realize our own nature. St. Thomas's doctrine of natural law shares this fundamental view with all the ancient theories. It can be said that the agreement in this regard is what most distinguishes all pre-modern theories of natural law from the modern one, which dispenses with the idea of human perfection altogether. This becomes possible, and even necessary, because modern

²⁵ L. Strauss, *Natural Right...*, p. 164.

political philosophers are convinced that the basis for natural law ought to be sought not in that which is highest in man, but in that which is common to all men, not in man's *telos*, but in his strongest passion.

The political implications of this new (modern) concept of natural law were of revolutionary character. Obligation was replaced by right or privilege as the basis for politics, defining fundamental functions of the state. Now it is not expected to take care of the virtuous life of its citizens, it should only ensure that their rights (to life, to happiness, property, freedom, etc.) are not violated. And it is important to see that while the realization of the social order based on obligations which would satisfy all or at least the majority of the citizens is principally impossible, with substituting rights for obligations, it becomes highly probable.

Since one of the results (deliberately assumed) of the above-mentioned changes was freeing the political sphere from the influence of religion, it would seem that the situation of philosophy would be significantly improved. Strauss does not intend to deny this; he emphasizes, as we recall, that democracy – modern democracy, based on the idea of natural rights of man – giving freedom to all, gives it to philosophers and philosophy: “While we are not permitted to remain silent on the dangers to which democracy exposes itself as well as human excellence, we cannot forget the obvious fact that by giving freedom to all, democracy also gives freedom to those who care for human excellence. No one prevents us from cultivating our garden or from setting up outposts which may come to be regarded by many citizens as salutary to the republic and as deserving or giving to it its tone”.²⁶

True, in this system the idea of perfection, about which philosophy cares, does not command too much respect; but at least it is not, as it seems, persecuted: no one, it seems, is forcing the philosopher to drop the claim that the philosophical way of life is the noblest way for a man, to hold something else to be the most important and evidently true, and thereby to agree to be absolutely obedient to it.

Nevertheless, Strauss fears that the ongoing extension and deepening of democracy is becoming a truly homogeneous and universal system. This is because he recognizes in these processes a mortal threat to philosophy.²⁷ But if these fears are justified, then perhaps his assessment of democracy as the most tolerant of all regimes is too optimistic. We might ask, after all, whether democracy is able to be tolerant of anti-democratic views. If it is not, then we might further wonder, if there doesn't lie in the basis of this (presumed at least) intolerance of democracy, a set of beliefs that are as dogmatic as the revealed truths of religion.

Strauss confirms the above assumption noting that modern philosophy has become a servant of non-philosophical purposes. If philosophy, in the original sense of the word, is being on the way, searching for answers to important questions (accompanied by the awareness of ignorance), then by becoming a servant, it is tantamount to holding certain answers for obvious and indisputable; to the obedient acceptance of certain beliefs that serve to justify the objectives which are

²⁶ L. Strauss, *Liberal Education and Responsibility*, [in:] L. Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago–London 1995), p. 24.

²⁷ L. Strauss, *Restatement...*, p. 226.

formulated outside philosophy. From now on, philosophy can only be supposed to look for the appropriate means to achieve those external aims.

Strauss knows perfectly well that once, before the seventeenth century, philosophy was treated as a servant and had to fight to remain itself, to survive. Although its present opponent is different – in his opinion, more dangerous – at least some of the essential planes of confrontation and ways of struggle have remained the same. These planes and ways best indicate what philosophy invariably is, and what invariably poses the greatest threat to philosophy. There is no doubt, however, that the beliefs which modern servile philosophy uncritically accepts and supports do not concern any model of human perfection – or the best possible way of life – which could stand in opposition to the philosophical one. This is because the dogmatism of democracy, in contrast to the dogmatism of the Bible, is based on completely opposite assumptions: that ways of life are all equivalent in terms of value and so none of them can be said to be the best; that there is no basis in the real world for any hierarchy of human ways of life; that the proclamation of a hierarchy of this kind is not only unjustified metaphysically, but also reprehensible morally.

In response to the question about the justification of those assumptions, the set of claims about the nature of man and reality is usually brought forward. The most important of them, at least from a political point of view, are about the fundamental, natural equality of all human beings; they say that neither in nature in general, nor in human nature, there is anything that would allow us to describe and evaluate human existence through the prism of excellence. Strauss points out, however, that allegedly (as he believes) objective observations which are supposed to justify these claims are highly problematic. In his book about the political philosophy of Hobbes, he tries to demonstrate that contrary to the claims of its author, the philosophy in question – proclaiming point-blank naturalistic equality and discarding all notions of human excellence – is not and cannot be scientifically justified. This is because sciences, due to their own way of understanding nature, are not able to capture what is specifically human and therefore cannot bring anything new to our understanding of human things, things of morality and politics. The real basis for the moral and political postulates of Hobbes, the founder of modern political philosophy, is not modern science, as he himself claimed, but fundamental, a specifically modern view of human life.²⁸

This view has been inferred by Hobbes not so much from scientific research as from the observation of everyday life. It received philosophical significance, and thus the importance for political philosophy, at the moment when it was converted from an observation on how people act and live into the question of how they *should* act and live. Hobbes's philosophical answer to this question turned out to be, according to Strauss, the most representative for the entire modernity and at the same time the most dangerous for philosophy. By identifying what is, with what should, be Hobbes and his followers have contributed significantly to the (present) situation where even by questioning the quality of the current state

²⁸ L. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Chicago–London 1963), p. x.

of reality and the possibilities for improving it has become unreliable, unnecessary, and even morally reprehensible.

Hobbes wanted to present his view of man and human life, drawn from his own experience, as the only true and universally valid view. Therefore, he found it necessary to rely on science to justify his political and moral concepts: "As he has at his disposal no method suitable to the demands of such a view on human life as he holds, he has no choice but to borrow the methods and conceptions supplied either by the philosophical tradition or by modern science".²⁹ Neither of these, however, is able to meet these requirements: "The traditional conceptions are not appropriate to a fundamentally untraditional view, and the conceptions provided by modern science are not congenial to a view of human life originating in a moral attitude".³⁰

Strauss's observations may make one reflect on whose servant or tool philosophy has become today. We already know that it is not a tool of natural sciences, which deal with different things – things that are not specifically human. But we also know that the force for which philosophy is now servant, seeks support in natural sciences in order to justify its own claims, to give them the appearance of objective validity. It seems that from the viewpoint of that force, the major advantage of natural sciences is that they are in principle limited to describing what is and deliberately refuses to deal with what should be. Their achievements might then serve as a justification for these solutions within the specifically human areas which deprive these areas of their vertical dimension. This dimension was described in classical philosophy (and in the Bible) in terms of human excellence or virtue. Referring to the scientific description of reality, commonly thought to be objectively true, the authors of these solutions were able to claim that the removal of the concept of excellence from the realm of morality and politics is not the result of the recognition of one particular way of life as better than others, but through moral and political reflection of universally valid truths about human and non-human nature.

V

We can describe this mysterious force which, relying on modern science, rules philosophy negatively – by what it is strongly opposed to. For when we say that the concept of human perfection is meaningless, we in fact deny the validity and even the possibility that man can overcome himself, climb from his present state of being to a qualitatively higher one. Hobbes argued for this move by pointing to the scientifically confirmed lack of teleology in human nature and, resulting also (but not exclusively) from this lack, the radical equality of all human beings which has its source in the equality of their biological constitution. Thus reducing man to his biological passions, he denied the existence of human capacity and desire for self-improvement, for going higher than pure naturalness that pre-modern thinkers described in terms of virtue and for which they tried to find metaphysical justification.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. x–xi.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. xi.

But a reluctance to transcend beyond what is, beyond what we are, can also be depicted positively, as the desire to remain at a current level of existence, the "spirit of gravity" (Nietzsche), which, in specific areas of human morality and politics manifests itself, among other things, in an effort to obtain for themselves the right to be released from the commitment to self-improvement. Such a right is genuinely common in the state of the "last man" in which the value of every human being is equally recognized by everybody, and in which every human being is fully satisfied with this kind of recognition. Achieving such a satisfaction – common, complete and final – would not be possible if there was still in people's minds some model of human excellence which inevitably introduces the hierarchy of the quality of human existence, and thus makes it impossible to establish recognition on the level which is the same for everyone.

So, the return to authentic philosophy, which infers the idea of excellence from the study of human nature, seems the only way to prevent the ultimate realization of the modern utopia. This is because philosophy, so understood, calls into question the beliefs that are fundamental to this utopia, especially the one that no differences between people can have moral and political significance. It should be noted that today, the fight of philosophy against the levelling of what is human in human being, the fight which it cannot renounce if it wants to remain itself, must take quite specific form and be fought in a way, on two fronts. On one hand, philosophy is forced to remind us of the now almost forgotten possibility of human excellence which it treats as our existential commitment. This excellence is purely an earthly one, significantly different from that which we know through revealed knowledge and which once was also a mortal threat to philosophy. On the other hand, when we recall the "secular" excellence, we encounter enormous resistance because the truths that are usually brought forward as a justification for the view that such excellence is impossible and/or unimportant, has today a status similar to that which it once had – the truths of the revealed knowledge of the revealed truth.

So, in order to teach effectively what it thinks to be the most important for a man, philosophy must also set its own knowledge of ignorance, which is not ignorance, against the dogmatic truths of modernity, which declares that it has possessed, based on scientific investigations, the objective knowledge of what man is and what the ultimate goals of human existence are. But Speaking out against these modern truths about man and the world is probably more difficult than speaking out against the truths contained in the Bible. This is because they are much nicer and much more conducive to the realization of current desires and interests of most people. It seems therefore, that as they are more likely to seek and fight for their rights rather than fulfill their obligations, they will more fanatically and steadfastly believe in these truths and ridicule and condemn those who dare to doubt it.

To these certainties, obvious to any reasonable person, philosophy – as philosophy, not as a servant to whatever cause – may oppose not so much other certainties, but only that necessarily incomplete and imperfect knowledge, resulting from our awareness of ignorance, which Socrates, who loved wisdom and was

“far from being committed to a specific cosmology”³¹ described as the knowledge of “the illusive character of the truth, of the whole”.³² Since “Socrates viewed man in the light of the mysterious character of the whole”, he could perceive him only “in the light of the unchangeable ideas, i.e., of the fundamental and permanent problems”.³³ Philosophical activity, which according to Socrates and Strauss is the most perfect form of human activity, is thus inevitably accompanied by the awareness that although man is not what he is in his present state of existence – as he is much more than that – he will never be certain as to who else he could, and should become. Preaching human, (different from divine) excellence, insisting that commitment to excellence, to strive beyond oneself, is inscribed in human nature, philosophy equates that excellence with a pursuit, an unceasing search whose aim, if it has some aim at all, will surely never be achieved: “In spite of its highness or nobility, it could appear as Sisyphean or ugly, when contrasts its achievement with its goal. Yet it is necessarily accompanied, sustained, and elevated by *eros*. It is graced by nature’s grace”.³⁴

As long as there is philosophy, memory of man’s excellence will prevail among men. Strauss also reminds us that memory or forgetfulness of human excellence is of huge, even decisive political significance. This is why we can and should talk about the political responsibility of philosophy, or philosophers. Someone who chooses for himself the philosophical way of life must take into account all the circumstances surrounding this life, including political ones. Philosophers should be aware, Strauss reminds them, that not all regimes are willing to allow them the freedom to philosophize and that the deadly hostility of some regimes towards philosophy can even lead to its destruction. So, the philosopher cannot be hostile nor even be indifferent to politics – he should try to have an influence on it. He must remember, however, that due to the nature of philosophy, this influence may only be moderate. Moderation, says Strauss, is necessary for philosopher not only because, thanks to it, he can get a hearing even in the market. It also protects him against the situation where the heed of the market turns into danger which could be deadly for him, for his thoughts, and the whole philosophy. It seems that this is what Strauss has in mind when he speaks of Nietzsche as the “step grandfather of fascism”.³⁵ The fact that the proponents of this ideology used his philosophy for their own purposes, turning and altering its real meaning, is according to Strauss, at least in part, the result of his political irresponsibility which in this case lies in the fact that he did not secure it effectively enough against such abuse. Strauss seems to suggest that Nietzsche did not take enough care to inform the readers of his books that they are “for all and none”; not enough emphatically stressed that at the basis of his concepts of ‘the will to power’ and ‘the superman’ lies the fundamental distinction between the noble and the wicked, and that they do not have much to do with biological facts, nor with the objective truths of morality that can be taught.

³¹ L. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes What Is Political Philosophy?*, p. 37.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 38.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

³⁵ L. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes Liberal Education...*, p. 24.

Perhaps Nietzsche's recklessness stemmed from the fact that, contrary to his own claims about the perspectival character of all human knowledge and all views on reality, he himself was sometimes giving in to the temptation to dogmatize. It may also be that Strauss's charges are exaggerated and not entirely fair. However should that be the case, they show how easily philosophy can convert or be turned into its opposite, and how dangerous, even for itself, can it become in the result of such a transformation.

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MacIntyre and the Anatomy of Patriotic Morality*

Abstract

Patriotism has recently become one of the most important concepts of contemporary political philosophy. Its contemporary practical and theoretical poignancy has been vividly presented in Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion of patriotic morality. He presents conflicting approaches and views of the patriotic morality as polarized around two moral categories: virtue and vice. The paper is devoted to the discussion of the relation between liberal tradition and a concept of patriotism which would be acceptable within its discourse on the one hand, and, on the other, the contents of patriotism within the communitarian tradition. The aim of the paper is to answer a question whether, from the perspective outlined by MacIntyre, patriotism is compatible with liberal values, and whether the patriotic morality will necessarily generate an internal conflict within that tradition.

Patriotism: a virtue or a vice?

Patriotism as a particular attitude in political practice and as a category of political philosophy is currently having a renaissance that can hardly be ignored. Especially today, this concept has become the subject of intense controversies, political as well as philosophical.¹ In the ongoing debate, some argue that, dangerous as it is, it should be irrevocably relegated to the junk room of history.

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¹ The concept of patriotism has become the subject of particularly heated ideological and political debates in contemporary Poland; see, e.g., A. Wolff-Pawęska, 'Jak dziś być patriotą' ['How to be a patriot today'], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23–24 September 2006, pp. 21–22; A. Hall, 'Jak w IV RP być patriotą' ['How to be a patriot in the Fourth Republic of Poland'], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 May 2007, p. 20; A. Podraza, 'Patriotyzm a historia' ['Patriotism and History'], *Forum Myśli Wolnej*, 32–33 (2007), pp. 5–13. Patriotism as a category that requires a new, deideologized definition, also provides inspiration for many of today's socio-economic initiatives, such as 'Patriotism of Tomorrow', 'Tax Patriotism', etc. This kind of engagement and such debates are not the subject of my interest here. For a more extensive treatment of the philosophical context of the debate on the concept of patriotism, see my article 'Kosmopolityzm i patriotyzm: spory starożytne i współczesne' ['Cosmopolitanism and patriotism: disputes ancient and modern'] (in press).

Others strive to restore its traditional sense, while still others attempt to give it a new sense, more adequate amidst the circumstances of globalization and ever more widespread cosmopolitan attitudes.

Richard Rorty once surprised his liberal readership by publishing a text in which he appreciated the role of patriotism in the contemporary world.² He appealed to the American left not to disdain patriotism as a value and to recognize the significant weight of the emotion of national pride and the sense of a shared national identity. Like John Stuart Mill before him, who believed that “free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities” because “the united political opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist” without patriotic feelings,³ Rorty argued that a sense of communal belonging and patriotic feelings are not at odds with the tenets of liberalism.⁴

Rorty’s opinion provoked a negative reaction from Martha C. Nussbaum, who formulated a contrary argument, demanding that the principles of patriotic education in the United States be abandoned in favour of cosmopolitan education. She stated that the American nation was appallingly ignorant of the rest of the world; the only acceptable remedy to that situation was, in her view, cosmopolitan education, which, by pushing other, especially particularistic, forms of belonging into the background, focuses on “reason and the love of humanity”; in her opinion only this kind of attitude, open to others, can teach people something else about themselves.⁵ A similar sentiment was expressed by Georg Kateb in his recent book, where, in line with the title of the book, which presented patriotism as one of the contemporary world’s mistakes, he attempted to demonstrate in multiple ways that “patriotism is a jealous and exclusive loyalty”⁶ and an expression of a “readiness to die and to kill for what is largely a figment of the imagination”.⁷

The numerous philosophers who have expressed their views on patriotism also include one representing communitarian thought: Alasdair MacIntyre. As a matter of fact, his article on this subject, first published in 1984, a decade before the discussion sparked off by Rorty and Nussbaum, and reprinted many times since,⁸ was the actual starting point of the philosophical debate on patriotism within American philosophy. It is worth pointing out in this connection that it was yet another demonstration of the intellectual power and the position of this philosopher, whose work had several times before constituted such important interven-

² R. Rorty, ‘The Unpatriotic Academy’, *New York Times*, 13 February 1994.

³ A. Mason, ‘Political Community, Liberal-nationalism and the Ethics of Assimilation’, *Ethics*, 109 (1999), p. 264.

⁴ R. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Harvard 1998), pp. 85–86.

⁵ See, e.g., M.C. Nussbaum, ‘Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism’, *Boston Review*, 19 [4] (1994). Other participants in this debate, published in the same issue of “Boston Review” included Hilary Putnam, Benjamin Barber, Judith Butler, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., William E. Connolly, Sissel Bok, and others.

⁶ G. Kateb, *Patriotism and Other Mistakes* (New Haven–London 2006), p. 10.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁸ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism a virtue?*, [in:] D. Matravers, J. Pike (eds.) *Debates in Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Anthology* (London–New York 2005), pp. 186–300.

tions in the philosophical matter that they brought about major reorientations of the subject matter of philosophical debates or even the emergence of new strands of intellectual activity.⁹

From the perspective proposed by MacIntyre, patriotism is not merely a possibility of human moral life but a constitutive necessity. Opposing the cosmopolitan orientation, for which patriotism, through association with nationalism, is undoubtedly a vice, he formulated a number of arguments in favour of an anti-cosmopolitan communitarian policy, from the perspective of which patriotism should be regarded as a virtue. MacIntyre frames the area of contradictory attitudes and notions concerning patriotism as polarized by two moral categories: virtue and vice. In an effort to define this ambiguous concept, frequently equated with other attitudes, he proposed that it should be considered a *sui generis* loyalty as an attitude peculiar to the representatives of a particular nation. Loyalty in a general sense is the expected attitude in numerous interpersonal relations; usually, however, when someone is expected to be loyal, an arithmetical exchange of favours is anticipated. This is not a relation that MacIntyre would consider a characteristic of patriotism understood as loyalty. Patriotism is not a course of action that requires the payout of dividends on accumulated capital as a result of the economization of all values, as expected by many in accordance with the well-known cynical principle that only cash is a fact, all else is an opinion. "What patriotism and other such attitudes involve is not just gratitude, but a particular kind of gratitude; and what those who treat patriotism and other such loyalties as virtues are committed to believing is not that what they owe their nation or whomever or whatever it is simply a requital for benefits received, based on some relationship of reciprocity of benefits".¹⁰

It is worth emphasizing at the outset that in liberal societies, for which freedom of association on a voluntary basis is an inalienable value, all forms of relationships that call for a deeper commitment of individuals are, for obvious reasons, approached with reluctance and suspicion. This leads to the conviction that it is safer to replace the notion of communal ties with institutions and technologies. Many thinkers, not necessarily associated with the communitarian movement, point out that "we are witnessing a crisis of behaviours based on the model of service".¹¹ Ever more widespread are attitudes of entitlement patriotism, manifested in demands addressed to the state based solely on the fact that one is a citizen. At the same time there is a growing tendency to "reduce patriotism to such virtues as diligently paying taxes and being law-abiding, decent, honest and punctual".¹²

⁹ His works that have played such a significant intervention role in Anglo-American philosophy include *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to Twentieth Century* (New York 1966), which resulted in the appreciation by Anglo-American moral philosophy of the historical dynamics of the contents of moral concepts, which had previously gone unnoticed and/or been completely ignored there due to a focus on analytical techniques. The work that initiated the rebirth of the communitarian movement in contemporary times was naturally *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame 1981).

¹⁰ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, p. 287–288.

¹¹ Z. Najder, 'Kto potrzebuje patriotyzmu?' ['Who Needs Patriotism?'], *Znak*, 4 (2002), p. 53.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 54. For a more extensive treatment see M. Cichocki, 'Solidarystyczne podstawy patriotyzmu' ['Solidaristic foundations of patriotism'], *Znak*, 4 (2002), pp. 13–30.

Pointing out the minimalism in allegiance to one's nation on the part of the proponents of liberal morality, MacIntyre does not embark on the simple exercise of formulating an opinion contradicting the above. One example of such an opinion is the assertion that patriotism requires unconditional and mindless devotion to one's own nation. This position is not only foreign to MacIntyre, but it also represents a misguided path of unconvincing argumentation where the participants concentrate on schematic oppositions. The debate on patriotism proposed by MacIntyre reveals differences of attitudes originating from two rival approaches to morality. The problem is that it cannot be correctly recognized and defined if we do reduce this to a dispute between different approaches to morality, i.e. if we conclude that there exists in the social space an independent object that needs to be adequately described. To use MacIntyre's words: "[...] if it is understood simply as a disagreement between two rival accounts of morality, as if there were some independently identifiable phenomenon situated somehow or other in the social world waiting to be described more or less accurately by the contending parties. What we have here are two rival and incompatible moralities, each of which is viewed from within by its adherents as morality-as-such, each of which makes its exclusive claim to our allegiance".¹³ If we now return to defining patriotism as a commitment, we begin to comprehend the nature of the broader context and the deeper reflection on the different understandings of morality and the continual process of confronting the results of this reflection: patriotism as a virtue versus patriotism as a vice. MacIntyre associates patriotism as a commitment with specific characteristics of a given nation, its merits and achievements. It is an inextricable association: the special character of merits and achievements is imparted by a particular nation; extracted from this relation, autonomous, they are incapable of being the object of loyalty understood in this way. These characteristics in MacIntyre's opinion "are indeed valued as merits and achievements and their character as merits and achievements provides reasons supportive of the patriot's attitudes. But the patriot does not value in the same way precisely similar merits and achievements when they are the merits and achievements of some nation other than his or hers. For he or she – at least in the role of patriot – values them not just as merits and achievements, but as the merits and achievements of this particular nation".¹⁴

¹³ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, p. 293.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 287. In light of the above deliberations it is worth noting the position of Leo Strauss, who, when pondering the essence of politics, returned to the classical political philosophy's cardinal question about the best political system. The issue of the forms of the state leads him to the question about the good citizen. Aristotle defines the good citizen in two of his works in different ways. In *The Constitution of the Athenians* he favours a "loyalty" definition of the attitude of a good citizen and thus a patriot. A good citizen is the one who invariably, regardless of the political system, serves his country; in other words, a good citizen is a patriot, for whom the country is the object of loyalty. In *Politics*, the good citizen is no longer an absolute attitude, free from assumptions, but rather one radically dependent on the system. Commenting on this Leo Strauss stressed that Aristotle in *Politics* questions the claim that patriotism is a sufficient attitude, for from a point of view of a patriot someone who values a particular regime over and above the country is an opponent, if not a traitor altogether; according Strauss whole humanity is subject to a law demanding to love both what is one's own

Understood in this way, patriotism is a specific, special kind of gratitude. The special character of this kind of gratitude includes the weight of another kind of bond. MacIntyre goes on to introduce an entire network of relationships, arguing that the specific nature of the set of relations emerging as a result of the receipt of benefits concerns not only the benefits themselves, it also being not insignificant from whom the benefits are received and what obligations their receipt entails. Benefits are an integral part of a particular tradition; benefits, as values, are conditioned by the context of their origins and the relationship of the history of “the benefactor and the recipient.” Thus, the attitude of an apologist of the interests of his or her own nation who sees that nation as the sole defender of some inherent moral ideal is not a manifestation of patriotism.¹⁵ An ideal, a model, something to desire and strive for can become a model for any person not associated with a given nation; an “unassociated” ideal can give rise to a number of arguments in favour of supporting a foreign nation. This sort of attitude is, according to MacIntyre, different from patriotism for two reasons: “first it is the ideal and not the nation which is the primary object of their regard; and secondly insofar as their regard for the ideal provides good reasons for allegiance to their country, it provides good reasons for anyone at all to uphold their country’s cause, irrespective of their nationality or citizenship”.¹⁶ At the same time, breaking the causal relationship between the ideal and the nation and making the latter independent of the ideal as the object of allegiance leads to an attitude that is no less distant from patriotism as understood here.

The virtue of patriotism

The definition of patriotism proposed by MacIntyre situates this attitude within the realm of virtues based on loyalty. It is an attitude whose proper significance necessitates the identification of a number of assumptions in the area of recognized morality as a sphere constituted by a network of relationships among categories that impart sense to one another. The author of *After Virtue* advocates a virtue defined in a local or particular manner, the existence of which is guaranteed by a particular community with its own history and tradition. This kind of definition of patriotism does not fit into a moral tradition according to which a moral judgment expressed by any rational individual is objective, impersonal, and independent of individual interests and circumstances. A significant assumption underlying morality understood along these lines, which MacIntyre terms “liberal morality”, is precisely the rejection of its particular character, which in the light of the above-mentioned meanings of patriotism as a virtue is the chief argument allowing us to exclude patriotism understood as a virtue from the realm of liberal morality. “The potential conflict between morality so understood and patriotism is at once clear. For patriotism requires me to exhibit peculiar devotion to my nation and you to yours. It requires me to regard such contingent social facts as

and what is good, and that there is a necessary tension between what is one’s own and what is good; see L. Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy* (Chicago–London 1998), pp. 9–55.

¹⁵ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, p. 287.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

where I was born and what government ruled over that place at that time, who my parents were, who my great-great-grandparents were and so on, as deciding for me the question of what virtuous action is – at least insofar as it is the virtue of patriotism which is in question. Hence the moral standpoint and the patriotic standpoint are systematically incompatible”.¹⁷ The incoherence of objective and objectivizing morality and the virtue of patriotism manifests itself with particular clarity where patriotism requires sacrifice to one’s nation. Readiness to sacrifice oneself for one’s nation is a requirement that manifests the incontrovertible need for particularity. In other words, making such an exceptional commitment to one’s nation is motivated by events that are irrelevant from an impersonal moral point of view.

Attempts to remove this discrepancy between liberalism and patriotism were an expression of an interpretation of the nature of the dispute that was negated by MacIntyre; those attempts relied on such subordination of patriotism to a particular conception of morality as to make patriotism a dedication to the cause of the nation but always within limits established by the objective point of view. Such approaches to the removal of the incompatibility did not gain the appreciation of critics on either side, including MacIntyre; in his view, the effectiveness of such efforts did not go beyond empty postulates, which, as such, could not lead to the actual resolution of the conflicts; at most, they could result in their intensification. One of the major and unavoidable reasons for this state of affairs stems from the scarcity of basic natural resources.¹⁸ To illustrate his thesis, MacIntyre outlines a hypothetical situation where a particular type of natural resource is the cause of a conflict, with at least two competing communities striving to secure rights giving them the exclusive use of the resource in order allow them to survive and transform themselves into separate nations. Two attitudes are possible in such conflicts: one stems from the requirements of objective morality; the other is the patriotic attitude. The imperative of objective morality imposes an obligation to divide resources without regard to belonging to a particular community; in this case the division criterion is not membership but humanity. The patriotic attitude, in contrast, requires not only an awareness of shared values but also efforts to make them a reality; therefore, it also requires that in the face of a threat to the existence one’s nation one should put up a fight in its defence. As Henryk Elzenberg put it, “one’s homeland is no longer one’s homeland if one does not fight for it”.¹⁹

Another category of disputes identified by MacIntyre, relating to ineffective efforts intended to unify two separate moral orders, arises from differences in beliefs promoted by communities with regard to the proper, desired way of life. A requirement of objective morality is that one must remain neutral “between rival and competing interests, but also between rival and competing sets of beliefs about the best way for human beings to live. Each individual is to be left free to pursue in his or her own way that way of life which he or she judges to be best; while

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 288.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ H. Elzenberg, ‘Naród i wojna’ [‘Nation and War’], *Etyka*, 25 (1990), p. 77.

morality by contrast consists of rules which, just because they are such that any rational person, independently of his or her interests or point of view on the best way for human beings to live, would assent to them, are equally binding on all persons".²⁰ Objective morality makes it possible to settle this conflict from the position of an independent arbitrator; since it is not entangled in the particularity of the interests and beliefs of either side of the dispute, a judgment expressed on its basis takes on the semblance of an objective opinion. From the point of view of patriotic morality, the essence of the dispute again makes it impossible to consider the dispute "from a bird's eye perspective"; a patriot's judgment must be marked by a lack of objectivity required by liberal morality.

It should be emphasized that MacIntyre uses the phrases "liberal impersonal morality" and "objective liberal morality" in a very generalized sense. In the sense in which he uses them, these descriptions refer to standardized criteria for the perception and evaluation of different traditions of moral doctrines. This generalized interpretation of the moral thought of liberalism can only be accepted as a certain formula that becomes necessary in order to carry out its model critique. It is significant that MacIntyre, who attributes a constitutive role to different contexts, rather easily abandons compelling distinctions where he arbitrarily concludes they contribute no significant substance.

Patriotism as a vice

In line with his intended reduction of the differences between such moral doctrines as the Kantian and the utilitarian ones or projects rooted in the contractarian tradition, MacIntyre identifies five postulates he considers common to each of these conceptions of morality. The first of the postulates, which according to MacIntyre are necessary elements of a rational reconstruction of the foundations of liberal morality, is that morality is a set of rules to which under ideal conditions all rational human beings would assent. The second one states that rules impose certain constraints on human conduct and are neutral with respect to antagonistic interests. The third one says that the neutrality of the rules in question also applies to competing sets of beliefs about the best way to live. The fourth postulate states that every human being should be understood as a "unit" that is both a moral agent and the subject-matter of morality. The fifth postulate expresses the idea that in the area of moral actions every individual is subject to objective, universalized laws, independent rules allowing one to evaluate any social structure. MacIntyre finds each of these postulates incompatible with his understanding of the concept of patriotism, because morality determined by the above assumptions stands in sharp contrast to patriotism as a virtue. For this reason, patriotism in the strong version must be treated as a vice. MacIntyre in fact develops his argument in such a way as to demonstrate that liberal morality, which inevitably leads to the recognition of patriotism as a vice, turns out to be a "morally dangerous phenomenon" itself.²¹

²⁰ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, pp. 289–290.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 297.

Using the language of Kant, it can be said that the process of extricating oneself from moral immaturity, leading to attaining the ability to use one's own reason "set [...] free from foreign direction", is the process of transcending social constraints. It is a path of liberation from dogmas and formulas, "the shackles of a perpetual state of immaturity".²² This liberation path leads to the independence of one's reason, one's self, and thus to the realization of human individual freedom. Perceiving oneself as a genuine agent, an unencumbered being, an independent self makes possible, according to Kant, the further realization of freedom, manifested in the formation of voluntary associations with others, the creation of communities in the cooperativist sense.²³ Liberated in this way, the self-consciousness of the moral agent is capable of attaining a viewpoint transcending any temporary social order, defined by a specific set of rules. In other words, an autonomous moral agent is able to put parentheses around – to challenge – everything that contains only casual social features of his or her existence. An individual becomes an autonomous agent to the extent he or she is able to free himself or herself from existing social and historical roles. Liberal ethics places the moral agent outside his or her personal experience, condemning him, in Sandel's words, "to lurch between detachment on the one hand and entanglement on the other".²⁴

Moral particularism

MacIntyre contrasts liberal, universal, objective morality with an alternative approach, which could be described as particularist. MacIntyre's moral particularism departs from the recognition of the inevitability of locally shaped moral principles. It is based on the recognition that we learn the rules of moral conduct by living in a particular community, with its specific "institutional systems". The specific conditions of a particular community, its history, its collection of canonical texts, and a particular social order generate the specific content of moral rules and terms of respecting them. Arguing in favour of such an understanding of morality, MacIntyre does not allow for the possibility that moral precepts originating as particular could be subjected to a procedure of universalization in an uncontroversial way. This is because he takes the view that we initially learn and acquire moral rules in a particular community, where they adopt a form "infected by particularity and partiality"; we practice them as we observe them in particular social institutions, which makes our conduct acceptable and comprehensible. The conception of the autonomy of the moral agent need not and does not imply creation *ex nihilo*.

A similar argument is advanced by David Gauthier: "It would be absurd to identify an individual with the formal process of reflection and choice in which autonomy is manifest. This process requires material – preferences and capacities

²² I. Kant, *An Answer to the Question "What is Enlightenment"*, [in:] I. Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*, transl. D.L. Colclasure (New Haven–London 2006), pp. 17–18.

²³ M.J. Sandel, *The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self*, [in:] M.J. Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics* (Cambridge–London 2006), p. 163.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 168.

– to serve as inputs, and there is no threat to autonomy in the recognition that these inputs are not, at least initially, autonomously determined. What makes a being autonomous is his or her capacity to alter given preferences by a rational, self-critical, reflective procedure, not a capacity to produce preferences with no prior basis”.²⁵ What is crucial is that such preferences and, to some extent, capacities “are not fixed by their socialization, which is not a process by which persons are hard-wired, but rather, at least in part, a process for the development of soft-wired beings, who have the capacity to change the manner in which they are constituted”.²⁶ In extreme liberal circles, it is not uncommon to hold the belief that the past is nothing but an encumbrance. In their view, being an autonomous moral agent does not involve recognizing externally imposed rules and observing them, but freeing oneself from their “yoke”, weakening their constraining force. The attitudes and actions of a self-conscious autonomous being must be created independently and autonomously. Only with time does an autonomous moral agent come to recognize independence, primordially, and universality in such specific, socially concrete rules. Proper morality consists precisely in identifying and moving from particular applications of moral rules to their framing as universal and general. Thus, impersonal morality provides universal standards, which in turn become the touchstone by which the diversity of social structures and behaviours can be judged from an independent standpoint. “Freed from the dictates of nature and the sanction of social roles, the human subject is installed as sovereign, cast as the author of the only moral meanings there are”.²⁷ Who we learn moral principles from is of no consequence for the content of morality or for the nature of our relationship to it. Under this conception of morality, patriotism again proves impossible to regard as a virtue; it must be considered a vice.

The escape from particularism into the space of objective and universal moral rules that should apply to a person “as such” is according to MacIntyre a manifestation of the hard-to-reject but also illusory belief in one of the greatest achievements of mankind, which is individualism. MacIntyre also believes, however, that the special relationship between individualism and universalism is essentially directed against the human being, that it hurts individuals. He further believes that one cannot just shake off particularism, criticized from the universalistic perspective. MacIntyre believes that any attempt to shed it is an artificial effort, in consequence leading to deformities or even a loss of understanding of one’s own identity and one’s individual relationship with the world.

The narrative constitution of morality

MacIntyre contrasts the liberal, universalist-individualist conception of morality with his alternative approach, based on three claims. The first one is that an individual apprehends the rules of morality only in the form in which they function in the community to which he belongs. According to the second one, the

²⁵ D. Gauthier, *The liberal individual*, [in:] D. Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement* (New York 1986), p. 349.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ M.J. Sandel, *The Procedural Republic...*, p. 163.

justification of morality is in the goods that individuals benefit from within their community. The third one is that an individual becomes a moral being within his or her community thanks to the sustenance provided by its members. As MacIntyre wrote in a well-known passage in *After Virtue*: “We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a person is, what the cast of characters may be in drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their action as in their words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources”.²⁸

Thus, what I am, says MacIntyre, requires the recognition of the narrative phenomenon of contextuality, for I am in large measure what I inherit; I am part of the history of my community, in which every deed is always an episode in some possible story. “A central contention of the morality of patriotism is that I will obliterate and lose a central dimension of the moral life if I do not understand the enacted narrative of my own individual life as embedded in the history of my country. For if I do not so understand it I will not understand what I owe to others or what others owe to me, for what crimes of my nation I am bound to make reparation, for what benefits to my nation I am bound to feel gratitude”.²⁹ A similar argument against the liberal understanding of man, morality, and society is advanced, under the influence of MacIntyre, by Michael Sandel: “Having character means ... [being] aware of the fact that moving within the story, which I neither chose, nor subject to my will, but that still affects my choices and behavior”.³⁰ Thus, an essential condition for understanding oneself is to master the language and the characteristic narratives, which include stories about the past of the community, its heroes and its established norms of behaviour. Upon entering a community, we become part of the accepted narrative, which we did not invent, and at the same time we start a new thread, a story in which everyone is a protagonist whose actions are episodes in some story. This nonnegotiable entanglement of the moral agent in a live narrative network is not a threat to the autonomy of his or her identity; it does not make him or her a slave.

Countering possible objections, MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, states as follows: “It is important to notice that I am not arguing that the concept of narrative or of intelligibility or of accountability are *more* fundamental than that of personal identity. The concepts of narrative, intelligibility and accountability presuppose

²⁸ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 216.

²⁹ A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, pp. 297–298.

³⁰ M.J. Sandel, *The Procedural Republic...*, p. 168.

the applicability of the concept of personal identity, just as it presupposes their applicability and just as indeed each of these three presupposes the applicability of the two others. The relationship is one of mutual presupposition. It does follow that all attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail. As all such attempts have”.³¹ MacIntyre considers the moral agent, the “I”, to be the bearer and co-creator of the living tradition, i.e. the historically ongoing and socially embodied dispute over the goods of the tradition. The moral agent, as part of the tradition, in a manner typical for himself or herself searches for his or her good in the context delimited by the framework of tradition, and it is only in this context that it is possible. Goods internal to practices are a compass providing orientation within the space of a specific tradition for any agent seeking the goods of an individual life, for knowledge of who I am, is also orientation in the moral space, in which questions about what is good and important and what is trivial and wrong have a permanent place.

It is worth noting in this context that a closely analogous understanding of the importance of language in shaping individual human identity has been formulated by Charles Taylor. The language faculty is what, in his opinion, makes us persons, because we become persons by being introduced through language into an incessantly ongoing conversation. Reflection on the human being entails “[studying] beings who only exist in, or are partly constituted by, a certain language”.³² Language exists and is maintained only within a particular community, which leads to the conclusion that a self can only exist amongst other selves. “A self can never be described without references to those who surround it”.³³ The dialogically acquired ability to judge what is good leads to the understanding of the background of the forms of social interaction in a given society and its conception of the good. In his *Sources of the Self*, Taylor expresses the conviction that every person’s self is formed within the space of questions within which orientation towards the good is sought and found. He adds that concepts such as good and fair are not features of the objective world but, on the contrary, are properties imbued with sense by reference to people and their lives.³⁴ The history, activities, and evaluation of a moral agent become meaningful in terms of broader and longer-lasting histories of a certain number of traditions. A person’s self-definition should be understood as an answer to the question “Who am I?” This question, in turn, derives its original meaning from a dialogue between people. “I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out”.³⁵ A call for dialogue is a necessary precondition

³¹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 218.

³² Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 34–35.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

for the development of the self, i.e. the process in which we learn the language of moral and spiritual orientation. A key feature of a dialogue about a particular object is that we make it our common object. "I can only learn what anger, love, anxiety, the aspiration to wholeness, etc., are through my and others" experience of these being objects for *us*, in some common space. [...] Later, I may innovate. I may develop an original way of understanding myself and human life..."³⁶

Taylor's statement that "[a] self can never be described without references to those who surround it", can be paraphrased to accurately capture MacIntyre's idea: a patriot's attitude can never be described without reference to other patriots who surround him or her, and that is impossible to accurately describe from an objective viewpoint.

The axiological conceptual framework

Only from this perspective does patriotism take on a fully intelligible form of a virtue. It is a moral perspective in which moral agents have convictions according to which there are desirable goods or goals whose value is impossible to measure with the same yardstick that we use for ordinary goals, goods, and objects of desire. It is a situation where some goals and goods are independent of particular desires, inclinations, and choices; moreover, they also constitute criteria for the evaluation of those choices. Within this moral perspective, agents realize specific standards of conduct, which consists in acting with a sense of qualitative distinctions. Recalling Taylor's position, it should be noted that he introduced the pertinent category, helpful in these deliberations, of a conceptual framework that provides a background for respected moral evaluations, intuitions, and reactions; its articulation is also an explication of what gives meaning to our moral reactions. The way to understand this notion of conceptual framework is that when we try to articulate the premises decisive for our evaluation of a given way of life or when we define our moral obligations, we situate ourselves within a moral space understood and explicable thanks to the accepted conceptual framework. Discarding it, shedding it as unnecessary, constraining baggage is as impossible as it is impossible to discard such particularities. Moreover, the horizons within which we conduct our lives and which make it meaningful must also include strong qualitative distinctions.³⁷ Each person's identity is defined by the conceptual framework within which every agent is involved in the process of dialogically determining what is good, valuable, what to do, how to proceed. Therefore, one's stance can only be defined within a community-constituted horizon, within which goods are situated providing a conceptual framework that allows orientation.³⁸ It is precisely the overriding goods that are the source of numerous conflicts; the most important ones, those that have the most followers, emerge by displacing prior, less adequate ones. For example, the modern principle of equal respect has developed through the negation of earlier, hierarchical conceptions of society. The conflict between the defenders of differently motivated patriotic attitudes, which are examples of

³⁶ *Ibidem.*

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

different and disparate understandings of the intrinsic value of patriotism, arises in a similar manner.

In terms of the conceptual framework for patriotism as a virtue adopted here, the absence of disputes is the result of rejecting the importance of all particularities and accepting that all goods – thus including those relied on by the followers of the different patriotisms – are theoretically of equal value, and therefore it is not impossible to point to one overarching cause of all of them.³⁹ This is a picture of a world in which individuals come across a mosaic of equivalent, arbitrary attitudes and goods. However, the perspective from which it could be concluded that all orders are equally arbitrary and, moreover, that all moral perspectives are also equal is, in the opinion of the defenders of patriotic morality, not available to people. In other words, we succumb to “self-deception” when we replace the obliterated “disputes” with “permanent coexistence of views”; such opinions can only be formulated from outside the moral order, from outside the moral orientation. The language we speak is a language of evaluation, a language of declaring what is good and right, and as such it presupposes an understanding of the background of social interaction forms in a given community and its conception of the good.

The language of moral deliberation smoothly changes into a language of evaluation, which in turn becomes a language of explication of what people do and feel.⁴⁰ “When we stand within the moral outlook of universal and equal respect, we don’t consider its condemnation of slavery, widow-burning, human sacrifice, or female circumcision only as expressions of our way of being, inviting a reciprocal and equally valid condemnation of our free labour, widow-remarriage, bloodless sacrifice, and sex equality from the societies where these strange practices flourish. We do find ourselves sometimes thinking in these terms, in our reflective moments, under the impress not only of naturalist epistemology but also of our anti-colonialist sympathies”.⁴¹

The conclusion that individuals become capable of morality by functioning within a particular community is thus but a not very original point of departure for solidifying the relationships among an individual originating from a particular community, its structure, internal relationships, history, and, finally, the morality shaped within its confines. Learning behaviours and moral rules within a community, individuals acquire knowledge of goods that are the reference points for the set of rules that has evolved and which justify this set. They are also “socially specific and particular” since it is the essence of goods that they persist in a particular society, and thus the goods of every individual are always the particular

³⁹ A somewhat similar, pluralist perspective on patriotism is adopted by Marcin Król, an advocate of liberalism, who states that it is not true that “in modern liberal societies, patriotism has vanished”. He justifies this statement with the argument that in societies of this kind one should not seek a single model of patriotism, because the essence of modernity in this area rests on pluralization. See M. Król, *Patriotyzm przyszłości [Patriotism of the future]* (Warszawa 2004), p. 112. In Król’s opinion, this is due to the central assumption of liberal patriotism, according to which “there are no permanent disputes, only a permanent coexistence of views [...], beliefs [...] that differ in essential ways” (*ibidem*, p. 128).

⁴⁰ Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 57.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

goods of a particular place, recognized by specific people in specific structures. The goods of a given community are embodied in specific practices specific for that community and the rules of morality functioning within it. In other words, the goods of a given individual are the goods of a place and time, and they provide a justification for the moral rules practiced. Hence, concludes MacIntyre, "I find my justification for allegiance to these rules of morality in my particular community; deprived of the life of that community, I would have no reason to be moral".⁴²

Triple interdependence

Taking the paradigm of every individual's moral life to be determined by the above-mentioned network of relationships, MacIntyre proclaims that only within the community will the individual find a justification for allegiance to the rules of morality; only in the community will the individual find understanding and support at moments critical for the individual in terms of obedience to the moral rules. Only within the community does the individual become a moral agent, because only in the community can this kind of capacity emerge.⁴³ In moments of moral weakness as a result of being blinded by temptations or desires, the individual needs and receives support from others around him. Being a moral agent involves interacting with other members of the community based on the principle of reciprocity. Moreover, "typically moral agency and continuing moral capacity are engendered and sustained in essential ways by particular institutionalised social ties in particular social groups".⁴⁴ The expectation of appropriate behaviour and moral attitudes from the members of a particular community defines its unique character for the constitution of morality. Moral demands directed at an individual are an expression of respect, not of a benefit. The absence of moral expectations of an individual is tantamount to a lack of respect for him or her, and eventually limits his or her moral capacity; hence the conclusion that the rejection of the community leads to the loss of correct standards. Thus, patriotism turns out to be a central virtue.

The paradigm of the moral life of any individual is constituted by a three-membered structure of interdependences. Recall: the individual only acquires moral rules in the form in which they function in his or her community; morality is justified by the goods the individual uses within the community; and the individual becomes a moral agent in the community thanks to the support of its members. Moral rules are legitimate in so far as their effectiveness takes concrete form in the life of the community and, at the same time, of its members. The members of the community may, in turn, assess the legitimacy of moral requirements through the prism of social roles fulfilled. Once again, the obvious conclusion is that the individual deprived of the community will not have a chance to develop as a moral agent.

⁴² A. MacIntyre, *Is patriotism is a virtue?*, p. 292.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

From the standpoint of contemporary individualism, an individual may, in the name of an overriding good, “a certain emancipating freedom”, question what he or she finds to be fortuitous features of his or her social existence and become who he or she wants to be.⁴⁵ Moreover, the author of *After Virtue* emphasizes the feature of liberal morality whereby “no limitations are or can be set upon the criticism of the social status quo. No institution, no practice, no loyalty can be immune from being put in question and perhaps rejected”.⁴⁶ The situation is different in the case of patriotic morality originating from a particular social group: precisely because it belongs to such a structured group, its source cannot become the object of unrestrained criticism. As a loyalty-based attitude, “patriotism has to be ... in some respects unconditional, so in just those respects rational criticism is ruled out”,⁴⁷ and thus it does not admit of examining certain fundamental beliefs and attitudes, which are maintained regardless of whether or not they can be justified rationally. From an objective point of view, patriotism, by condemning itself to irrationality, condemns itself to rejection, just like any other irrational attitude. In the further part of his argument, MacIntyre states that, from a historical perspective, what can be exempted from criticism is the nation conceived as a project, “a project somehow or other brought to birth in the past and carried on so that a morally distinctive community was brought into being which embodied a claim to political autonomy in its various organised and institutionalized expressions”.⁴⁸

The value of patriotism is expressed in an attitude of understanding, accepting, and readiness to implement some kind of historical continuity of the nation project, which consists in the ability to link the past to the moral and political identity of the patriot and to the future. A patriot’s indisputable and unquestionable duty is to sustain the continuity of the project of his or her nation. This is the only duty that is not open to criticism and cannot be challenged or rejected by the patriot, for the denial of loyalty would be tantamount to the loss of the values that constitute the patriot. Any form of government that frustrates the project deserves to be rejected, and the strength of patriotism in those who make the effort to overthrow governments should not be questioned. It may happen, however, that from an impartial point of view the interests of the nation will require the patriot to carry out a task that cannot be reconciled with the interests of humanity, and such a situation makes it impossible to dismiss the concern that under certain conditions patriotism as a virtue can become a source of genuine moral danger.⁴⁹

Similarly, objective liberal morality is not free of features that make it a dangerous attitude. The danger manifests itself in a situation where threats upsetting the stability of the expected interests emerge in a liberal community dominated by

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 294.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 295.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*. MacIntyre defends patriotism and only mentions in passing a real possibility of reconciling traditional patriotism with “some other morality of universal moral law, which sets limits to and provides both sanction for and correction of the particularist morality of the patriot” (p. 299). This does not preclude, in his opinion, the conciliatory coexistence of patriotism with Christianity, Thomistic natural law, or the Rights of Man.

membership based on reciprocal self-interest. Will referring to the neutral standards of liberal morality be able to counteract the destructive conflicts of interest? "The problem is," argues MacIntyre, "that some motivation has to be provided for allegiance to the standards of impartiality and impersonality which both has rational justification and can outweigh the considerations provided by interest. Since any large need for such allegiance arises precisely and only when and insofar as the possibility of appeals to reciprocity in interests has broken down, such reciprocity can no longer provide the relevant kind of motivation. The appeal to moral agents qua rational beings to place their allegiance to impersonal rationality above that to their interests has, just because it is an appeal to rationality, to furnish an adequate reason for so doing".⁵⁰

The clash between the danger inherent in the irrational attitude of a patriot and the danger to which the attitude of a protagonist of the morality of patriotism is exposed does not lead any further than to the possibility of concluding that the mutual objections are valid. Neither side's argument refutes that of the other, nor is either argument stronger than that advanced by the opposite side. These positions cannot be reconciled because they represent two different traditions speaking untranslatable languages, referring to irreconcilable values.⁵¹ Any attempt to link particularist ties with impersonal universal causes must give rise to a number of conflicts that an appeal to rationality will not be able to prevent.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 298.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 299, 303. MacIntyre believes that in North America the Hegelian categories of *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität* have been equated with, respectively, the morality of a particular society and the impersonal liberal morality. This must result in the above-mentioned inconsistency. At the same time, however, MacIntyre's statement places him among thinkers mentioned at the outset, especially Rorty and Taylor, who discern the necessity and the possibility of the constructive co-existence of liberal requirements with regard to institutional rules and patriotic requirements when it comes to the effective functioning of institutions.

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**Historicism and Justification.
Alasdair MacIntyre's Historicist Conception of
Justification***

Abstract

In this paper I argue that MacIntyre's historicism involves a conception concerning the nature of justification, formulated in opposition to ahistorical foundationalism. According to foundationalism justification is a matter of an appeal to certain universal and timeless principles, constituting the basis of all claims to knowledge. The merit of MacIntyre's historicism is that it enables one to answer two difficulties, insuperable to foundationalism. First, it enables to explain why some basic statements are being treated as justified even though there exist, in the same area, contending sets of basic statements: justified basic statements are those which emerge from the history of a given tradition of enquiry as incontestable. Secondly, it allows to explain how we can rationally claim that a certain set of statements is rationally better than others even though they are mutually incommensurable: certain set of statements is better than others, and therefore justified, if and only if it can resolve difficulties insuperable to its rivals and explain both successes and defeats of its rivals.

The philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre is sometimes called "historicist". In this paper I will analyse his philosophy precisely in regard to this category, trying to make clear what exactly this "historicism" would be in this case. I think that this problem is worth considering from two reasons. Firstly, the very category of historicism, although it is often used in various discussions, does not seem very clear. By "historicism" it is meant:

1. Metaphysical and epistemological position which claims that history has a constitutive role with regard to the human mode of existence and to human knowledge;

* The original version published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, 2 [2] (2007), pp. 61–78.

2. Methodological position, according to which systematic inquiries should be preceded by historical investigations;

3. Position in the philosophy of history, according to which there are some overriding, general mechanisms ruling the course of actual history.¹

The main thesis of the present paper is that MacIntyre's historicism is a position concerning the nature of justification. It follows that his historicism is based upon an epistemological position, and its analysis could shed some light on the understanding of this category.

Secondly, it seems that analysis of MacIntyre's historicism can also shed some light on our general understanding of his philosophy. A scrutiny of the existing literature concerning MacIntyre shows that his epistemological ideas are far more rarely discussed than ethical, metaethical or political. Of course, the category of historicism appears quite frequently in commentaries and discussions concerning MacIntyre's philosophy, but – as in other discussions as it was signaled above – it expresses only somewhat unclear intuitions connected with the fact that MacIntyre is a distinguished expert on the history of philosophy (and especially the history of ethics), and he often presents some historical analyses in his works. What is lacking are analyses exploring historicist strands in his philosophy.² So the present paper aims at making clear these strands, and showing their basically epistemological character.

In most general terms, MacIntyre's historicism is an epistemological thesis according to which justification has a historical character. Historicism so understood stands in opposition to a position which can be anti-historicism, according to which justification is basically non-historical, because it involves invoking some timeless, universal principles or criteria. A classical exemplification of anti-historicism is modern foundationalism, so I will begin my analyses with a presentation of this position and its difficulties. Next I will describe MacIntyre's critique of foundationalism, and I will present his positive views on the nature of justification, discussing the problems of: justification of basis statements, the concept of cognitive superiority of theories, and justification in a sense of activity.

1. Foundationalism and its difficulties

The negative point of reference for MacIntyre's conception is a position widely accepted in modern philosophy, called foundationalism, which claims that justification requires using some universal and timeless epistemic standards:

It was a central aspiration of the Enlightenment [...] to provide for debate in the public realm standards and methods of rational justification by which alternative courses of action could be adjudged just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlightened. So, it was

¹ A. Bronk, *Historyzm*, [in:] J. Herbut (red.), *Leksykon filozofii klasycznej* (Lublin 1997), p. 268–269.

² The only exception can be found in: R. Stern, *MacIntyre and Historicism*, [in:] J. Horton, S. Mendus (eds.), *After MacIntyre. Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Cambridge 1991), pp. 146–160.

hoped, reason would displace authority and tradition. Rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers took to be the accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places.³

By 'foundationalism' I mean here a thesis concerning the structure of justification, according to which every set of statements which aspires to be knowledge can be divided into two subsets: subset of basic statements and subset of non-basic statements. Given set of non-basic statements is justified if and only if it inferentially follows from a certain set of basic statements. Relation between these two sets is usually depicted by a metaphor of building: knowledge is like a building – its foundations are basic statements, and next levels of knowledge are built on them.

As this characterization shows, in the foundationalistic approach, the heart of the matter moves to the problem of the justification of basic statements. There are basically two versions of this potion: rationalistic, according to which basic statements are clear and distinct judgments (principles) of reason; and empiricist, according to which basic statements are perceptual judgments. Since they are basic statements, and so they are the terminus of justification of all other statements, their justification cannot consist of being implied by any other statements. So in order to meet a possible objection of arbitrariness, foundationalists usually maintain that the justification of basic statements lies in certain internal properties, which makes the question concerning their justification senseless. Such statements are then supposed to be self-evident (in the sense of intellectual or of empirical self-evidence), necessary, undeniable to any rational person etc.⁴ A set of such statements makes this foundation on which all other claims to knowledge are built.

The importance of foundationalism so understood goes far beyond the somewhat technical question concerning the structure of knowledge. This conception of justification lies at the heart of the modern understanding of philosophy. According to this understanding, philosophy is the central area of knowledge, because it investigates claims which are put forward in other areas of culture, and looks for this ultimate foundation, by which all those claims can be supported.⁵ Thus philosophy provides us with an ultimate tribunal which can adjudge controversies in a given area of knowledge: only those claims can be accepted which can be founded on foundations discovered by philosophy.⁶

³ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame 1988), p. 6.

⁴ A. Bronk, *Fundamentalizm i antyfundamentalizm*, [in:] A. Bronk (red.), *Filozofować dziś. Z badań nad filozofią najnowszą* (Lublin 1995), p. 67.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 44–46.

⁶ Classical formulation of this project can be found in works of R. Descartes, who claimed that philosophy should firstly look for certain knowledge on which other claims to knowledge can be founded, and secondly settle finally all futile controversies, which all traditional philosophy was plenty of. See for example: R. Descartes, *Principia philosophiae*, [in:] R. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, C. Adam, G. Milhaud (eds.), vol. 8 (Paris 1905), and especially: R. Decartes, *Lettre de L'Autheur*

Modern foundationalism is characterized by its anti-historicism. According to the version sketched above, foundations of knowledge have a timeless, unchangeable and universal character. This implies that the cognitive value of any given set of statements is independent from where, when and by whom it was formulated; if it is to be a part of the body of knowledge, it should be liable to justification by universal and timeless principles.

Foundationalism so understood has two interrelated difficulties. The first objection that can be raised against it begins with the fact that according to this conception, justification consists in invoking certain basic statements which have some internal properties making them "self-justifying". Of course, this conception fits quite well to our actual epistemic practices: in order to justify a given statement, we invoke other, more fundamental, statements, and because we find them self-evident, we do not justify them. The problem, however, is that in almost every area of discourse there can be found some mutually incompatible sets of statements which can be justified by invoking different sets of basic statements. Those basic statements of all incompatible sets of claims are justified on the basis of their internal properties, say, self-evidence. So it may seem that all are equally justified. But why should we prefer one of these sets at the expense of another, if they are all equally justified? Foundationalism faces here an essential difficulty: either to admit that an acceptance of one the concurring sets is arbitrary, or to admit that self-evidence is not a sufficient condition of justification of basic statements. The choice of the first option looks dangerously relativistic, so if one wants to avoid such consequences, this problem has to be explained in some other way.

The second difficulty can be illustrated most easily in the context of the debates in the philosophy of science concerning the concept of incommensurability. If we assume foundationalism, we should claim that scientific theories which come one after the other are progressively better in the light of some general standards ruling theory-choice. But as Th. Kuhn and P. Feyerabend (among others) showed, there are no such general, timeless and universal standards of evaluation. Theories are formulated and developed in frames provided by mutually incommensurable paradigms, which means that there are different standards of epistemic evaluation in each of these paradigms. Those standards are of such a nature that they prescribe refutation of theories formulated in other paradigms, which means that any theory formulated within a new paradigm should be rejected from the point of view of an old one – and *vice versa*. But, on the other hand, paradigm-changes as a matter of fact occur. This suggests that these changes do not have a rational character, but that they are rather ruled by some non-cognitive factors, such as group interests, religious beliefs, emotions and so on, and that new theories are by no means cognitively better than their predecessors.⁷ So the second question which cannot be answered within the framework of foundationalism concerns the nature of cognitive superiority of one set of statements over another. But before

à celui qui a traduit cette livre, [in:] R. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, C. Adam, G. Milhaud (eds.), vol. 9 (Paris 1904), pp. 1–22 (299–321).

⁷ See for example: A. Chalmers, *What is This Thing Called Science?* (St Lucia 1982), ch. VIII.

we proceed to analyse the answers which MacIntyre gives to these questions, let us first have a look at the reasons that steer his rejection of foundationalism.

2. MacIntyre's anti-foundationalism

It is quite surprising that MacIntyre – who is, by the way, widely known as one of the leading critics of the Enlightenment – is very rarely interpreted as being anti-foundationalist.⁸ His critique of “the Enlightenment project of justifying morality” which he executed in *After Virtue* and subsequent publications is even *prima facie* anti-foundationalist.⁹ According to MacIntyre the central aspiration of the Enlightenment was to provide universal and undeniable foundations for all moral knowledge; but, as he argues, this project failed, and the foundationalism underlying it is false. So it is absolutely justifiable to put MacIntyre amongst contemporary anti-foundationalists, such as P. Feyerabend, H.-G. Gadamer, Th. Kuhn, H. Putnam, W. Quine or R. Rorty. The importance of his views lies in the fact that his anti-foundationalist critique in the field of ethics is an extension of similar conceptions developed by the aforementioned authors in epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of science.

MacIntyre rejects the Enlightenment project because in his opinion its main task has not been done so far: the universal and timeless principles of justification in morality has not been discovered, and moreover there are no prospects that this investigation will ever be successful:

Yet both the thinkers of Enlightenment and their successors proved unable to agree as to what precisely those principles were which would be found undeniable by all rational persons. One kind of answer was given by the authors of *Encyclopédie*, a second by Rousseau, a third by Bentham, a fourth by Kant, a fifth by Scottish philosophers of common sense and their French and American disciples. Nor has subsequent history diminished the extent of such disagreement. It has rather enlarged it. Consequently, the legacy of Enlightenment has been the provision of an ideal of rational justification which it has proved impossible to attain.¹⁰

A realisation of the Enlightenment project was to be a solution for difficulties with adjudicating debates in the public sphere: to find such principles which would be timeless and universal, and which would thus allow to adjudicate objectively

⁸ In Anglophone literature this category hardly appears (the exception is: J. Schneewind, ‘MacIntyre and Indispensability of Tradition’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51 (1991), pp. 165–168, but there one can find only a short remark on this problem; there are no commentaries which make this category central) – which is quite surprising, given that this thesis is one of the central elements of his philosophy. It seems that negligence of this interpretative category is one of the reasons why epistemological strands of MacIntyre's philosophy has not been adequately appreciated so far.

⁹ See A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame 1984), pp. 36–78; continuation of this critique in: A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, pp. 326–348.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

between the claims of competing views. The problem, however, is that the Enlightenment failed on this field. According to MacIntyre, this fact is especially evident in ethics: all attempts to discover the universal and neutral foundation of moral knowledge have not led to any conclusive results.

As MacIntyre writes in *After Virtue*, the traditional moral scheme, which was both teleological and theistic (being a Christian version of Aristotelianism), was rejected at the beginning of modernity. An effect of this rejection was that moral principles were deprived of a context which provided them with justification. So, during the Enlightenment, philosophers engaged in the project of constructing justification for them, which would be based on a set of principles universal and undeniable to any rational person. According to MacIntyre, the greatest representatives of this project were D. Hume, D. Diderot, I. Kant and utilitarianists. Kant's categorical imperative, the principle of utility or statements concerning basic human passions were to be such first principles of morality – universal foundations of moral knowledge.

The problem, however, is that those first principles were to be universal and indisputable to any rational person. But – says MacIntyre – philosophers have provided us with many sets of such principles, and none of them seem to have such rational power that, according to the ideal, it had to have:

[...] the history of attempts to construct a morality for tradition-free individuals, whether by an appeal to one of several conceptions of universalizability or to one out of equally multifarious conceptions of utility or to shred intuitions or to some combination of these, has in its outcome [...] been a history of continuously unresolved disputes, so that there emerges no uncontested and incontestable account of what tradition-independent morality consist in and consequently no neutral set of criteria by means of which the claims of rival and contending traditions could be adjudicated. The evidence for the failure of Kant's heirs in these constructive enterprises is contained in the reviews of the books expounding them in the professional philosophical journals. The book review pages of those journals are the graveyards of constructive academic philosophy, and any doubts as to whether rational consensus might not be after all be achievable in modern academic moral philosophy can be put to rest by reading them through regularly.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 334. In a similarly ironic tone, MacIntyre also writes in his discussion with O. O'Neill: "Thus although differences in social circumstances may, as O'Neill notes, give morality thus conceived a content that varies to some degree with circumstance, at its core there are invariant principles compelling assent from all (or at the very least almost all) rational individuals. There are specifically Kantian versions of this thesis, there are various utilitarian versions, there are contractarian versions, there are *all too many* versions. For the best evidence that there are no such principles constituting morality is that no one version of them has been able to compel assent from all, or anything like all, the members of that distinguished subclass of rational persons, modern moral philosophers, let alone from all rational persons"; A. MacIntyre, 'Moral Rationality, Tradition, and Aristotle: a Reply to Onora O'Neill, Raimond Gaita, and Stephen R. L. Clark', *Inquiry*, 26 (1984), p. 451.

According to MacIntyre, the ambition of the Enlightenment thinkers was to supply a certain set of universal principles which would permit us to find the truth and thus to terminate debates between different traditions. Those principles were to be undeniable to any rational person. But the next generations of philosophers, aiming at the realisation of this ideal, provided us only with many sets of mutually incompatible principles pretending to such a status. A history of the Enlightenment project shows then that it is not possible to find such fundamental principles which would be both universal and allow us to conclude the debates between competing traditions.

It is quite interesting that MacIntyre's position is at this point similar to neo-pragmatism. In H. Putnam's essay *Why is a Philosopher?* we can find the following fragment:

[...] I can sympathize with the urge to *know*, to *have* a totalistic explanation [...] But I am saying that the project of providing such an explanation has failed. It has failed not because it was an illegitimate urge [...] but because it goes beyond the bounds of any notion of explanation that we have. Saying this is, perhaps, not putting the grand projects of Metaphysics and Epistemology away for good – what another millennium, or another turn in human history as profound as the Renaissance, may bring forth is not for us today to guess – but it is saying that the time has come for a moratorium on Ontology and a moratorium on Epistemology. Or rather, the time has come for a moratorium on the kind of ontological speculation that seeks to describe the Furniture of the Universe and to tell what is Really There and what in Only a Human Projection, and for a moratorium on the kind of epistemological speculation that seeks to tell us the One Method by which all our beliefs can be appraised.¹²

Putnam, like MacIntyre, thinks that attempts to found our claims to knowledge on unshakeable grounds have failed, and so it would be rational to postpone them. A possible explanation of this failure is surely, as Putnam suggests, that the ideal of knowledge and justification which is assumed by the Enlightenment project totally exceeds our understanding. In his critique of the Enlightenment, MacIntyre shows that realisation of this project induces far greater chaos than what it was supposed to overcome. The significance of this critique is that MacIntyre proposes an anti-foundationalist critique of claims of modern ethics – or rather Ethics, if we want to follow Putnam's convention, thus recapitulating the history of a modern project into another area of knowledge.

But isn't, one can raise an objection, MacIntyre's anti-foundationalism simply false? MacIntyre namely maintains that the Enlightenment project of justifying morality by the universal and neutral criteria of justification has failed, and so we should stop looking for such a neutral ground. But, one can argue, there are

¹² H. Putnam, *Why is a Philosopher?*, [in:] H. Putnam, *Realism With a Human Face* (Cambridge 1990), pp. 117–118.

many epistemic standards which are shared by different traditions. So it is not true that there are no criteria which would be universal and neutral with regard to competing positions. Such standards can be supplied, for example, by rules of logic or by elementary empirical data.

In order to meet this objection, let us note that MacIntyre does not claim that there are no standards which would be shared by competing traditions (they would be shared, and so be neutral in regard to given traditions, and in a sense universal – shared by all important traditions). According to him, such standards undeniably exist. The problem, however, is that those principles shared by competing traditions are too weak to conclude the debates between them. So for example:

[...] observance of the laws of logic is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for rationality, whether theoretical or practical. It is on what has to be added to observance of the laws of logic to justify ascriptions of rationality [...] that disagreement arises concerning the fundamental nature of rationality [...].¹³

Similarly for the empirical data or – as they are usually called – “facts”:

There are no preconceptual or even pretheoretical data, and this entails that no set of examples of action, no matter how comprehensive, can provide a neutral court of appeal for decision between rival theories. I do not of course mean to say, and it would be absurd to say, that empirical facts about action and its generation are not such as to impose constraints upon what constitute a plausible or workable conceptualization. But those constraints are, unsurprisingly, consistent with a range of theories at least as wide as, and possibly a good deal wider than, the set of rival, mutually incompatible theories which emerged from the histories [...].¹⁴

So it seems that the objection sketched above is not compelling. It is not the case that different traditions of inquiry have nothing in common, and they exist, so to speak, in totally different worlds. Just the opposite: they share a lot of epistemic standards, such as laws of logic or empirical facts. But that which is shared is not enough to adjudicate debates between them. So of course there are principles which are universal and neutral, but they do not fulfil the second condition imposed on principles which are to be the foundation of knowledge: they are not strong enough to adjudicate debates between competing positions.

The second objection which can be raised against MacIntyre’s view outlined above concerns the mode of justification of his position. This justification is basically historical. As he says himself:

¹³ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, p. 4. In another place he writes: “It is not then that competing traditions do not share some standards. All the traditions with which we have been concerned agree in according a certain authority to logic both in their theory and their practice. Were it not so, their adherents would be unable to disagree in a way which they do. But that upon which they agree is insufficient to resolve these disagreements”; *ibidem*, p. 351.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 333.

The status of this statement [that there are no timeless standards of justification] parallels that of other negative existential assertions. The verdict that there are no such-and-such's is never stronger than the claim that all attempts to show that there are such-and-such's have failed to date *and* that every reasonable way of attempting to show that there are such-and-such's which anyone has thought of to date has by now been thoroughly investigated.¹⁵

The objection is that, as such standards have not yet been found, it does not follow that there can be no such standards. And so the conclusion can be that there is nothing particularly wrong in continuing such investigations.

Of course, it is true that the historical argument that MacIntyre proposes cannot exclude the future possibility that one day someone will discover such epistemological first principles. Nonetheless, if the numerous attempts done so far have failed, then prospects that further investigations will be successful is diminishing, and we have strong reasons – and even getting stronger with every failed attempt – to believe that there are no such standards:

From the fact that liberalism does not provide a neutral tradition-independent ground from which a verdict may be passed upon the rival claims of conflicting traditions [...] it does not of course follow that there is no such neutral ground. And it is clear that there can be no sound *a priori* argument to demonstrate that such is impossible. What is equally clear, however, is that liberalism is by far the strongest claimant to provide such a ground which has so far appeared in human history or which is likely to appear in foreseeable future. That liberalism fails in this respect, therefore, provides the strongest reason that we can actually have for asserting that there is no such neutral ground [...].¹⁶

The Enlightenment project of justifying morality by appeal to a set of universal and neutral standards to a foundation of all moral knowledge, has therefore failed: no set fulfilling all conditions has been discovered. Moreover, this project aimed at concluding debates between competing traditions – but in effect the number of positions generating insoluble discussions has increased, and not diminished. The fact that this project fails in every case is, according to MacIntyre, sufficient reason to abandon it – to proclaim a moratorium on it, to use Putnam's terminology.

3. Justification of basic statements

According to MacIntyre, in order to answer the question posed in the section 1, above, we have to first allow for the historical nature of the existence of conceptions and theories. MacIntyre substitutes Kuhn's concept of a paradigm for the concept of "tradition of inquiry", which puts greater emphasis exactly on the historical changes of theories:

¹⁵ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 453.

¹⁶ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, p. 346.

[...] what is appraised is always a history; for it is not just a series of theories which is appraised, but a series which stand in various complex relationships to each other through time which is appraised. [...] at each stage the theory bears the marks of its previous history, of a series of confirming or anomalous facts, with other theories, with metaphysical points of view, and so on. The kinetic theory not merely has, but is a history, and to evaluate it is to evaluate how it has fared in this large variety of encounters.¹⁷

Theories are not static entities which are handed down from one generation to another in an unchanged form. Just the opposite – every theory is always tested in new ways, and in effect it is developed, reformulated and improved. When at some moment it appears that it cannot be sustained any more, it is substituted by a new, better one. Thus, theories form a series, in which elements are connected by some specific relations. Evaluation of a theory which is accepted at a given time requires investigating how it has fared in the history so far, and at which point it was better than its rivals.

In MacIntyre's terminology, tradition is something that grows around a historical series of theories in a sense explicated above. According to everyday use, the term "tradition" can be used in two ways: as a name of an object and as a name of an action.¹⁸ In the first sense, tradition is a cultural heritage, i.e. a body of beliefs, mores, norms, values etc., which is handed down in a given society from one generation to another. In the second sense, tradition is the very process of this cultural transmission of heritage. MacIntyre, introducing the concept of tradition to his philosophy, referred to the discussion in the philosophy of science that has expanded since the publication of Th. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The concept of 'tradition of enquiry' is MacIntyre's equivalent to Kuhn's concept of a paradigm.¹⁹ According to Kuhn, a paradigm is a theoretical frame within which the enquiries are conducted. This frame includes a specific language, ontology, fundamental assumptions, methodological rules, aims of enquiry etc. So, using the aforementioned distinction between an active and an objective sense of a term 'tradition', it can be said that tradition of enquiry in an objective sense is a body of theses, theories, hypotheses, ontological assumptions, epistemic standards, problems to solve etc., which are transmitted between given generations of enquirers; in this sense, MacIntyre's concept of tradition is identical with Kuhn's concept of a paradigm with regard to content and extension. The difference between them lies in the fact that the concept of tradition has a dynamic aspect; that which constitutes a tradition in an objective sense is at the same time something that is transmitted between generations, and is transformed during this process of transmission. So, MacIntyre using the concept of tradition instead of the concept

¹⁷ A. MacIntyre, *Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and Philosophy of Science*, [in:] A. MacIntyre, *The Tasks of Philosophy. Selected Essays*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge 2006), p. 20.

¹⁸ See A. Bronk, *Tradycja*, [in:] *Religia. Encyklopedia PWN*, vol. 9 (Warszawa 2003), p. 20.

¹⁹ In the philosophy of science a similar terminological move has been made by L. Laudan, who introduced the term 'research tradition'; see L. Laudan, *Progress and its Problems* (Los Angeles 1977).

of a paradigm, puts an emphasis on the fact that the frame within which the enquiries are led undergoes changes, and the following stages are strictly connected with one another.

According to MacIntyre, a justification of the basic statements does not lie in the fact that they are self-evident and undeniable, but rather in the fact that they – and the whole body of theory of which they are a part – appeared best in the history of a given tradition:

Because every such rational tradition begins from the contingency and positivity of some set of established beliefs, the rationality of tradition is inevitably anti-Cartesian. In systematizing and ordering the truths they take themselves to have discovered, the adherents of a tradition may well assign a primary place in the structures of their theorising to certain truths and treat them as first metaphysical or practical principles. But such principles will have had to vindicate themselves in the historical process of dialectical justification. [...] such first principles themselves, and indeed the whole body of a theory of which they are a part, themselves will be understood to require justification. The kind of justification that they receive is at once dialectical and historical. They are justified insofar as in the history of this tradition they have, by surviving the process of dialectical questioning, vindicated themselves as superior to their historical predecessors. Hence such first principles are not self-sufficient, self-justifying epistemological principles. They may indeed be regarded as both necessary and evident, but their necessity and their evidentness will be characterisable as such only to and by those whose thought is framed by the kind of conceptual scheme from which they emerge as a key element, in the formulation and reformulation of the theories informed by that historically developing conceptual scheme.²⁰

A justification of a given set of basic statements (or “first principles”, as MacIntyre calls them using the terminology of rationalistic versions of foundationalism) – and of the whole theory of which they are a part – lies in the fact that this set appeared to be the best in the history of a given tradition. From this, it follows that MacIntyre’s historicism should not be understood as a trivial interpretative thesis – according to which, in order to understand a given view, we first have to understand the context in which this view has been formulated. This is how MacIntyre himself formulated his position in a discussion with W. Frankena:

He [i.e. Frankena] seems to hold that the methods of analytic philosophy are sufficient to establish what is true or false and what is reasonable to believe in moral philosophy and that historical enquiry is irrelevant. I hold not only that historical enquiry is required in order to establish what a particular point of view is, but also that it is in its

²⁰ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, p. 360.

historical encounter that any given point of view establishes or fails to establish its rational superiority relative to its particular rivals in some specific contexts.²¹

As this quotation shows, according to MacIntyre, an investigation into the historical context is not only a necessary condition for understanding a given view, but also for evaluating it. He agrees with the foundationalists that those “first principles” or basic statements of a given theory may be taken as self-evident and undeniable, and as a matter of fact they usually are. But fulfilment of this condition is insufficient for holding a theory justified: a given theory can be taken as justified only when it emerges from the process of enquiry as better than its rivals.

This analysis allows us to reconstruct MacIntyre’s definition of justification in the following way:

[Justification]: a theory T1 is justified if and only if there is a theory T2 such that T1 is better than T2.

But one can raise an objection against this definition, pointing out that the conception of justification explicated here cannot be called historicist. It seems that every foundationalist can agree that a theory accepted in a given period is justified in the sense that it is better than its rivals and predecessors. The problem is, what exactly are the criteria according to which a given theory is taken to be better than its rivals? A foundationalist would say that the criteria in question are some timeless, universal standards which govern theory-evaluation. So it seems that the definition of the justification formulated above can be easily reconciled with anti-historicist foundationalism by pointing out that every new theory is better than its predecessors in the light of some universal, timeless standards. If therefore this definition were to be really historicist, it should be supplemented by an argument showing that those criteria are of historical character.

Moreover, an anti-foundationalist can also be reluctant to accept this definition. As I have shown above, the main problem with foundationalism concerns the explication of the cognitive superiority of a series of theories. On the one hand, according to foundationalism, a new theory is better than the old one in the light of some universal and timeless standards. On the other hand authors such as Kuhn or Feyerabend are usually interpreted as holding that there are no such standards, because standards change as the paradigms change. So the anti-foundationalist objection to this definition would be that the justification cannot be defined by the concept of cognitive superiority of one theory over another, because this assumes the existence of some universal and timeless standards. But as every incommensurable theory has its own criteria of cognitive evaluation which are of such character that they imply a rejection of its rivals, a passage from one theory, T1, to another theory T2 cannot be rational from the point of view of T1. This implies that justification cannot be defined by the concept of cognitive superiority.

²¹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 269.

4. The problem of cognitive superiority

MacIntyre's solutions to the problems which have been outlined above, have pointed out that the transition between two incommensurable theories can be rational from the point of view of the rejected theory, and thus one theory can be assessed as cognitively superior than another, incommensurable one, even if there are no universal and timeless standards governing theory-evaluation. This thesis also provides an answer to the foundationalist objection: standards according to which one theory is assessed as cognitively better than its predecessors are in each case supplied by the older theory, and thus those standards may be validly considered as historical.

How is that possible? According to MacIntyre, the whole set of epistemic standards in a given tradition of enquiry includes also some guidelines concerning assessment of the progress. MacIntyre again points out to the fact of historical existence of theories: their historicity implies, among other things, that every theory generates a set of problems to solve. This set is the basis of evaluation of the progress of a given tradition of enquiry:

[...] theories in natural sciences as elsewhere have an essentially historical existence. There is no such thing as the kinetic theory of gases; there is only *the* kinetic theory as it was in 1850, the theory as it was in 1870, the theory as it is now and so on. [...] Bodies of theory, that is to say, themselves progress or fail to progress and they do so because and insofar as they provide by their incoherences and their inadequacies – incoherences and inadequacy judged by the standards of the body of theory itself – a definition of problems, the solution of which provides direction for the formulation and reformulation of that body of theory. [...] By providing itself with problems, a body of theory provides itself with goals and with some measure of its own progress or lack of progress towards those goals.²²

According to MacIntyre, it should be observed that among the epistemic standards of a given tradition, one can distinguish a set of standards which are used in evaluating the progress of enquiries in this tradition. The basis of those standards are problems that are generated by theories accepted within this tradition. If enquirers are successful in solving these problems and thus the enquiries develop, then this tradition is taken to be progressive.

But MacIntyre notes that at a certain stage it can happen that this tradition ceases to be progressive and becomes – to use Lakatos' phrase – degenerated:

The development of a problematic within a tradition characteristically goes through certain well marked stages [...] among them periods in which progress, as judged by the standards internal to that particular tradition, falters or fails, attempt after attempt to solve or resolve cer-

²² A. MacIntyre, *The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past*, [in:] R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, Q. Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge 1984), p. 42.

tain key problems or issues proves fruitless, and the tradition appears, again by its own standards, to have degenerated.²³

An appearance of problems irresolvable on the grounds of a theory accepted so far stops the progress within the tradition and makes continuing enquiries hard, or even impossible. In such a situation it is therefore necessary to formulate a new theory. This new theory will be assessed as better than its predecessor and rationally accepted instead of it, only in case when it makes it possible to solve the problems irresolvable to its predecessor and by explaining its predecessor's successes and failures:

One large scale theory – say Newtonian mechanics – may be judged decisively superior to another – say, the mechanics of medieval impetus theory, if and only if the former body of theory enables us to give an adequate and by the best standards we have true explanation of why the latter body of theory both enjoyed the successes and victories that it did *and* suffered the defeats and frustrations that that it did, where success and failure, victory and defeat are defined in terms of the standards for success and failure, victory and defeat provided by what I earlier called the internal problematic of the latter body of theory.²⁴ The solution to a genuine epistemological crisis requires the invention or discovery of new concepts and the framing of some new type or types of theory which meet [...] highly exacting requirements. First, this in some ways radically new and conceptually enriched scheme, if it is to put an end to epistemological crisis, must furnish a solution to the problems which had been previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way. Second, it must also provide an explanation of just what it was which rendered the tradition, before it acquired these new resources, sterile or incoherent or both.²⁵

As these quotations show, the grounds for accepting a new theory as better than its predecessor are supplied by the older theory. The newer one is rationally accepted as better because it allows to solve the problems insoluble to its predecessor and at the same time explaining successes and failures of this earlier theory – successes and failures, that is, as they are defined on the grounds of this earlier theory.

Thus we come to the definition of cognitive superiority which is assumed by MacIntyre's conception:

[Superiority]: a theory T1 is cognitively superior than a theory T2 if and only if T1 makes it possible to (1) solve the problems unsolvable

²³ A. MacIntyre, *Relativism, Power, and Philosophy*, [in:] K. Baynes, J. Bohman, Th. McCarthy (eds.), *After Philosophy. End or Transformation?* (Cambridge–London 1988), p. 407.

²⁴ A. MacIntyre, *A Relationship of Philosophy*, p. 43.

²⁵ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, p. 362.

to T2, and (2) explain successes and failures of T2, where both “unsolvable problems” and “successes and failures” are defined from the point of view of T2.

This analysis shows that two theories can be incommensurable in the sense of Kuhn – i.e. they may have different epistemic standards which prescribe a rejection of rival theories – and at the same time one such theory can be assessed as better from the point of view of the other. It is possible thanks to what MacIntyre calls the “historical existence of theories”. There are such stages in the development of a given theory in which enquirers face problems making the further progress impossible. If, in such a case, a theory is formulated which can meet the conditions mentioned above, then it will be assessed as better, and this will be done from the point of view of the earlier theory. By “from the point of view” I mean that the new theory is not justified in the light of epistemic standards of the earlier theory narrowly understood (its “first principles”), because they – as Kuhn claims – prescribe its rejection. It is rather that within a given tradition there are some other standards – standards concerning progress – and not only those “first principles”. According to those standards, the earlier theory defines conditions (generally understood as in points (1) and (2) in [Superiority]) which have to be met by the new theory if it is to be accepted in a rational way. In this sense, the new theory can be better from the point of view of the earlier one, even if it does not fulfil the conditions which are specified by its “first principles”.

Those remarks allow us to make the definition of justification more precise in the following way:

[Justification]: a theory T1 is justified if, and only if, there is a theory T2 such that T1 is rationally superior to T2 from the point of view of T2.

So we can say that MacIntyre’s historicism should be understood as a position in the discussion concerning the nature of justification, according to which justification of a given set of basic statements – and of a theory of which they are a part – is its cognitive superiority over other, rival sets of such statements, evaluated as such from their point of view. Historicism so understood provides an answer to the foundationalist objection, according to which, as we remember, by defining justification by the notion of cognitive superiority over rival sets of statements, does not imply making this definition historicist, since this superiority can be established by some timeless, universal standards. In response to this objection MacIntyre claims that – as the analysis of the debates between incommensurable theories shows – the new theory is assessed as cognitively better from the point of the earlier theory, and this means that standards governing theory-choice are always strictly connected with a given historical context.

At the same time, MacIntyre’s conception allows us to respond to the anti-foundationalist objection, according to which justification cannot be defined by the notion of cognitive superiority, since this is something relative to standards of rival theories, and they are of such a character that they settle the debate against

rival theories. In response to this objection MacIntyre claims that if epistemic standards connected with a given theory are understood widely enough, then there are some standards which can in specific situations prefer rival theories – and this makes the use of the notion of ‘cognitive superiority’ valid.

As those analyses show, MacIntyre’s historicism provides a solution to the problems of foundationalism. On the one hand, it explains the nature of justification of basic statements. According to his conception, it is not only a matter of their being self-evident, but rather that they are justified as emerging as the best from the history of a given tradition. On the other hand, historicism makes it possible to explain the problem of the rationality of theory-change, and thus to determine the nature of cognitive superiority of one theory over others.

5. Concluding remarks: history and justification as a process

The historicist conception of justification that has been reconstructed above seems to have some interesting consequences concerning the nature of justification understood as an activity. Namely, according to foundationalism, a given claim is justified if [1] it can be inferred from a set of basic statements, or [2] it itself is a basic statement, that is, self-evident. So in the first case “justification” = “deducibility from basic statements”, and in the second – “justification” = “self-evidence”. This means that justification as an activity is either [1] showing inferential relations between statements, or [2] showing that a given statement has an internal property that guarantees self-evidence.

In MacIntyre’s conception justification is a more complicated activity. It doesn’t consist in showing – or not only – logical relations (as in [1]) or arguing that a given statement has a certain internal property (as in [2]). As one may suppose, if justification as a property is cognitive superiority of one set of statements over others in historical context, then justification as an activity will be writing history:

[...] the concept of rational justification which is at home in that form of enquiry [i.e. tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive] is essentially historical. To justify is to narrate how the argument has gone so far.²⁶

To evaluate a theory [...] is precisely to write that history, that narrative of defeats and victories [of this theory].²⁷

So in this historicist approach, justification as an activity, consists in reconstructing the history of a given theory and investigating whether reformulations and changes in this history actually meet the conditions imposed by the epistemic standards of this tradition. To put it more informally, a successful justification is, according to MacIntyre, the writing of history with a “happy end”.

The importance of this consequence lies in the fact that it deprives philosophy of its central place that it was accorded in the modern, foundationalist project.

²⁶ A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?...*, p. 8.

²⁷ A. MacIntyre, *Epistemological Crises*, p. 20.

As I mentioned in section 1, according to this conception, philosophy is the most fundamental field of knowledge, because by investigating ultimate principles it provides the foundation for all knowledge; philosophy is precisely this discipline that adjudicates the claims made within all other areas of culture. The rejection of this modern foundationalism implies the fall of all those “founding” claims of philosophy, which was very strongly proclaimed in the writings of neo-pragmatists, especially of H. Putnam and R. Rorty.²⁸ But where neo-pragmatists underline only the need to revise traditional understanding of philosophy, MacIntyre goes further and tries to answer the question whether, after this abandonment of philosophy, there will be any discipline investigating the claims to knowledge in various areas of culture. It is not surprising that this discipline will be history. If the justification of a given set of statements is its cognitive superiority over its rival and predecessors, then the only way to check whether the theories accepted in a given moment are actually justified is to investigate their history. This thesis applies to all areas of knowledge – from theology and philosophy to natural sciences:

[...] natural science can be a rational form of enquiry, if and only if the writing of a true dramatic narrative – that is, of history understood in a particular way – can be a rational activity. Scientific reason turns out to be subordinate to, and intelligible only in terms of, historical reason.²⁹

So, in the historicist approach of MacIntyre, history, specifically understood, takes the place of philosophy as a discipline investigating the human claims to knowledge. Of course this does not mean that history will provide us with some “grounds” or “foundations” for all human knowledge, as it was to be in the modern project. MacIntyre’s conception makes it only possible to see the nature of the historical aspect of human knowledge, and that the rationality of all our claims to knowledge are inevitably and strictly connected the historical context in which we formulate our claims.

²⁸ See W. Throop, *Neopragmatyzm po piętnastu latach*, transl. P. Gutowski, T. Szubka, [in:] *Filozofować dziś*, pp. 347–374.

²⁹ A. MacIntyre, *Epistemological Crises*, p. 15.

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Political Philosophy and Postmodern Society*

Abstract

The paper is devoted to the problem of the condition of contemporary democracy. The authoress is arguing that contemporary democracy is being daunted by the triumphant instrumental rationality, supremacy of the free market, weakening of the states and of the public sphere; it is also being endangered by the evaporation social security, by the atrophying individual agency and the sense of reality, as well as by the globalization. Postmodernity is intertwined with pluralism, ambiguity and multidirectedness of the cultural processes. Ambiguity and diversity are now becoming an important basis for the liberal democracy, threatened by demise. Postmodernity generates a new type of mentality within which the awareness of compartmentalization and contingency of human life goes hand in hand with moral sensitivity, toleration and readiness to engage in a dialogue. A postmodern person is seen as endowed with a capability to live without absolute certainty, harmonious unity and perfect accord. The task of contemporary political philosophy is to work out a new political concept of a person and of human reason, a new delineation of the basic distinctions, e.g. between totalitarianism and democracy, violence and persuasion; it has also to work out a conception of justice adequate for the postmodern society. The fate of the liberal democracy will depend upon the human ability to find a way between the extremes and contradictions of contemporary postmodern world.

Since the end of XVIII century many authors have reflected upon such negative phenomena of social life as disappearance of public relations, alienation of an individual, relativism, cynicism, chaos, nihilism and social anomy. These phenomena are interpreted as the deformation of unilaterally rationalized practice of everyday life. Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectics of the Enlightenment* claim that the auto destructive rationality of the Enlightenment will shortly lead to the fall of liberal democracy.¹ Will this prediction come true? The optimistic ratio-

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¹ M. Horkheimer, T.W. Adorno, *Dialektyka Oświecenia*, transl. M. Łukasiewicz (Warszawa 1994); see also M. Horkheimer, *Krytyka instrumentalnego rozumu*, transl. J. Doktor, [in:] M. Horkheimer, *Spoleczna funkcja filozofii. Wybór pism* (Warszawa 1987).

nality of the Enlightenment definitely had its credits in breaking the feudal social system but, at the same time, it triggered the dialectics that reduces the world of virtues to what is perceived in the instrumental (economic) categories. Such way of thinking and acting transforms into authority that is organized in a far more deceitful way than traditional monarchies and modern despotisms.² In connection with this some intellectuals proclaim democracy as dead.³ Such verdict seems to be premature and too simplified in its equivocality.

The feature of post modernity is unequivocality, immense complexity of any social and cultural processes and the fact that it is not unidirectional. Modern culture is full of varied ambivalences – contradictory tendencies and self-excluding ideals come to the surface with equal strength. Standardization coexists with pluralism, homogeneity with disintegration, democratic equality with new versions of inequality.⁴ The apology resonates with the defence of human rights, the fascination of modernity is intertwined with the worship of tradition and interest in the past. The citizen of the modern states is not certain of its identity; at times he feels to be an employee, a consumer, the member of the heritage of traditions, or co-author of communities bound by an agreement. In modern information technology, postindustrial society it is the science and advanced technologies that have the prime role. This, however, goes along with a strong objection to technocratic order (criticism of instrumental reason). The most important flaw of modernity is the phenomenon of globalization that goes along the opposite tendencies appreciating the local communities and cultures triggering the ethnic nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms.

Globalization involves, first of all, connecting the economies of individual states and domination of the mobile, international capital on the world-wide market.⁵ Physical labor has lost its significance to the benefit of intellectual efforts of international teams of technicians, engineers, managers and officers that are flexible, mobile, available and have the power of intellect. Bauman claims that globalization consists in concentration of capital and other effective financial instruments with which the concentration of freedom of activity and mobility is connected.⁶ “In its deepest sense the notion of globalization expresses the indefinite, fussy and autonomic nature of the world and the related issues, the lack of centre, the lack of the operator’s desktop, team of directors and the management”.⁷ According to Bauman globalization is only the name for the new disorder of the world. The synthesis, dispersion, integration of capital political disintegration, globalization and

² Total and perfidious character of this authority is exposed, for example, in the works of M. Foucault.

³ See J.-M. Guehenno, *La fin de la démocratie*, (Paris 1993).

⁴ See J.-P. Fitoussi, P. Rosanvallon, *Czas nowych nierówności*, transl. S. Amsterdamski (Kraków 2000). The authors emphasise that social sciences have difficulties capturing the peculiarity of contemporary society partially because of the fact that they use the notions and methods developed in the 50s; see p. 19.

⁵ See Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja i co z tego dla ludzi wynika*, transl. E. Klekot (Warszawa 2000).

⁶ See Z. Bauman, ‘Nowy nieporządek świata’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18–19 listopada 2000, p. 24.

⁷ Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja...*, p. 71 (transl. M.Ż.).

territorial division are complementary processes. R. Robertson coined a specific term to suit this – ‘glocalisation’. The term implies the interdependence between what is global and with what is local. Showing appreciation to the local communities, ethnic and religious minorities in the glocalised world has not equivocal character either. Some emphasize that it boils to the reduction of specific, local culture to folklore, which may arise curiosity but it certainly cannot be treated seriously.

Undoubtedly, some of the problems that we face these days have global character and they cannot be solved with the aid of local means. At the same time globalization is not conducive to solving these problems. The latest trends in economy (neoliberalism, turbocapitalism)⁸ aim at completely depriving politics of the power to act effectively, which results in the phenomenon described as disappearance of state. Alongside globalization there are processes of creating regions and groups retaining the local identity.⁹ Multiplicity of the territorial units that are politically weak promotes economic globalization and there is no contradiction in it: “globalization of economy in all its aspects and the power with which the emphasis is put on the *principle of territoriality* are closely connected with one another and they condition themselves mutually” – we may say after Bauman.¹⁰ The world-wide finances, trade, information technology industry are interested in the existence of weak states. These states are given specific requirements which are supposed to make them even weaker: “Opening the doors, saying goodbye to the thought of independent economic policy is the basic and submissively fulfilled condition to receive the financial aid of the world-wide banks and monetary funds”.¹¹ Weak states which cannot influence the economy can only have the function of police districts securing the order necessary to conduct business activities.¹² Such state gives up the previous social politics and starts to deal with distribution ‘from the bottom to the top’. “It is not difficult thus to see that substitution of the weak territorial states with some kind of legislative and political authority having the world-wide range would be destructive for the interests of world-wide markets”.¹³

The weakness of the state and the necessity of re-defining its role are stressed also by other authors. Staniszkis speaks about the decreasing role of politics understood as mechanism of systemic regulations and the twilight of the metaphysics of a state that is coerced by globalization.¹⁴ According to her: “Globalization has

⁸ See E. Luttwak, *Turbokapitalizm. Zwycięzcy i przegrani światowej gospodarki*, transl. E. Kaia (Wrocław 2000).

⁹ See A. Chmielewski, *Globalizm i partykularyzm*, [in:] A. Chmielewski, *Dwie koncepcje jedności. Interwencje filozoficzne* (Bydgoszcz–Wrocław 2006), pp. 39–51.

¹⁰ Z. Bauman, *Nowy nieporządek świata...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² In response to these and other problems of the contemporary world a new offer of the so called new Third Way – see A. Giddens, *The Third Way and Its Critics* (Cambridge 2000); A. Giddens, *Trzecia droga. Odnowa socjaldemokracji*, transl. H. Jankowska (Warszawa 1999); A. Giddens, *Poza lewicą i prawicą*, transl. J. Serwański (Poznań 2001); see also *Spory wokół nowej Trzeciej Drogi*, T. Kowalik (red.) (Warszawa 2001).

¹³ Z. Bauman, *Nowy nieporządek świata...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

¹⁴ The most complete modern idea of the state was given by M. Weber. He treated the state as the embodiment of the process of rationalisation and overcoming of antynomy between formal

radically changed the nature of the authority and the way it functions through its dispersion and making it more and more impersonal, invisible and difficult to put in the scheme of the equivocal hierarchy. Democracy gets corroded because the area regulated by the institutions traditionally associated with politics is shrinking. The centre of gravity in thinking about the authority is changing: even more often it is not about the authority over somebody, but the about the authority of the system over oneself; in other words – it is more about the possibility to realize complex purposes, or about the possibility to be an actor having specific identity and driving force”.¹⁵ Kempny defines globalization as “widening the scope of social, economic and political relations in a way resulting in re-defining the role of national state and appearance of pressure strengthening the autonomy of local or regional cultural identities”.¹⁶ Guehenno points out that global market is not able to create any global community. “Political disintermediation not only obliterates the territorial borders of national states but even within these states the differentiation between the public and private interests loses its significance and the states cease to have the monopoly to manage the public interests. There appear new public spaces that are not based on the national logic and they remain between the abstract globalization and individuals that are closed in their loneliness. The very essence of authority changes and imposes new ways of control”.¹⁷ Even the most traditional functions of the state connected with the defense of sovereignty get slowly but continuously eroded – the national defense, police and jurisdiction today are perceived as part of the wide service sector and not the expression of the state independence.¹⁸

These changes gave rise to the new kind of mentality in which the awareness of fragmentarity and episodic character of individual existence co-exists with the feeling of moral insecurity and provisional character of any life choices.¹⁹ It seems that in the consumption philosophy of life that dominates these days there is no place for the past seriousness and modernistic moral virtues.²⁰ Together with the progressing stratification into the areas of poverty and richness and progressing

rationality (state, procedure) and substantial rationality (the idea of justice). This idea of the state is no longer current.

¹⁵ J. Staniszkis, *O władzy i bezsilności* (Kraków 2006), p. 15 (transl. M.Ż.). See J. Staniszkis, *Władza globalizacji* (Warszawa 2003).

¹⁶ M. Kempny, ‘Czy globalizacja kulturowa współdecyduje o dynamice społeczeństw postkomunistycznych?’, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 1 (2000), p. 7 (transl. M.Ż.). This author is of the opinion that globalisation although unequivocal may become the category defining the new epoch in the history of evolution of the human society.

¹⁷ J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności*, transl. B. Janicka (Kraków 2001), p. 12. The term *dezintermediation* was taken from the contemporary jargon of finances. It means weakening the political and administrative intermediary structures as a result of what an individual meets the processes of a worldwide range – see *ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹⁹ See Z. Bauman, *Razem osobno*, transl. T. Kunz (Kraków 2003).

²⁰ See F. Jameson, *Postmodernizm i społeczeństwo konsumpcyjne*, transl. P. Czapliński, [in:] R. Nycz (eds.), *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów* (Kraków 1997), pp. 190–213; see also F. Jameson, ‘Postmodernizm albo kulturowa logika późnego kapitalizmu’, transl. K. Malita, *Pismo Literacko-Artystyczne*, 4 (1988).

fragmentarisation of life and culture the feeling of stability and safety is disappearing. Some advance the thesis that we live in the 'society of risk'.²¹ The mood of insecurity, danger and bitterness express themselves in contest between various manifestations of modernity. The processes against technicisation, unification, totalisation of civilisation; against expanding poverty, large city lifestyle and consumption mentality. A significant part of society feel the apathy, the feeling of helplessness, the individual subjectivity succumb to atrophy.²² The ideology of multiculturalism that encourages to the friendly interest in any kinds of cultural distinctness clashes with xenophobia and manifestations of nationalism. The increasing variation in lifestyles and philosophies of life (pluralism) goes together with the superficiality of convictions and loss of sense creating horizons (Taylor) and the disappearance of the feeling of self-identity. The transformations refer also to the religious sphere (new spirituality). There follows privatization, subjectivisation and syncretism of culture.²³ The tendency is increasing to prioritise the ethical elements and not – strictly doctrinal – various beliefs. The value of personal religious experience is emphasized and there is a call for democracy in the Church, the tolerance and readiness to the dialogue with the unbelievers and the representatives of other religions. Some authors see the religious renewal as a saving from the increasing libertinism. Belle thinks that religion is the only force that is able to restore the discipline and ethos in the society (renewal of the virtues); religion implies come back to the tradition resistant to criticism and enabling clear identification, giving the feeling of existential safety.²⁴ Another important feature of modern culture is anesthetization that consists not only in raising interest in the space we live in, or our body and external appearance,²⁵ but also in eliminating the borders between the art and life, transforming life into a piece of art, treating the individual existence as the opportunity to make autocreational experiments and to consciously develop one's identity.²⁶ "To exist aesthetically means to resist the temptation of legalization of one's lifestyle through any kind of transcendental principles. It also implies to reject the traditional notion of ego as a substance or

²¹ See U. Beck, *Spoleczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, transl. S. Cieřła (Warszawa 2002).

²² The phenomenon of making decisions regarding one's own life and transferring them to others as well as the phenomenon of withdrawing from the public sphere and fear of confrontation with others is referred to by Chmielewski as interpassivity and public agoraphobia – see A. Chmielewski, *Dwie koncepcje jednořci...*, pp. 31–38.

²³ See D. Cupitt, *Po Bogu. O przyszłości religii*, transl. P. Sitarski (Warszawa 1998); Ch. Taylor *Oblicza religii dzisiaj*, transl. A. Lipszyc (Kraków 2002); J. Casanova, *Religie publiczne w nowoczesnym świecie*, transl. T. Kunz (Kraków 2005); T. Luckman, *Niewidzialna religia. Problem religii we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, transl. L. Bluszcz (Kraków 1996).

²⁴ See D. Bell, *Kulturowe sprzeczności kapitalizmu*, tłum. S. Amsterdamski (Warszawa 1994).

²⁵ See T. Eagleton, *Iluzje postmodernizmu*, transl. P. Rymarczyk (Warszawa 1998), pp. 99–101.

²⁶ See M. Featherstone, *Postmodernizm i estetyzacja życia codziennego*, transl. P. Czapliński, J. Lang, [in:] *Postmodernizm...*, pp. 299–332; see also A. Bielik-Robsoh, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowości* (Kraków 2000), pp. 17–34. The problem of identity of an individual is also described in the work of A. Kuncce, *Tożsamość i postmodernizm* (Warszawa 2003).

at least the source of authentic life”.²⁷ Some claim that the aesthetic attitude transforms into moral pessimism and narcissism.²⁸

Postmodern culture has no distinct centre and has no unifying force. It is not homogenous. It is mosaic-like and extremely pluralistic. MacIntyre advances the thesis that its apparent richness only disguises the gloomy world of the emptiness. The spiritual patrons of this period include the sociologists of knowledge from the Edinburg school and Weber and Simmel, the classicists of the sociological thought whose works allow us to understand the cultural processes leading to its development. The representatives of post modernity include such authors as Bauman and Baudrillard – dealing with the description and diagnosis of the current situation of culture.²⁹ Baudrillard was a pioneer of the research into the social background of postmodernism. In his works he stressed the dominant role of media in the development of the vision of the world. The peculiarity of this vision is – according to him – the fact that fast changing messages lose their reference to the reality and they become *simulacra* – copies without the original, maps without the territories. What follows is the agony of the reality which cannot be further differentiated from images, interpretations and reproductions. New, unreal hyper-reality is created which has a derivative character as regards the descriptions.³⁰ Media are the creators of the reality, changing the mass society into the post-mass society. The current masses are not present in the space. Individuals who create it do not see one another, do not participate in meetings, but they stay in loneliness from where they trace their media symbols, discourses, fashions, programmes and the hierarchies of values. The loneliness is the expression of ‘individualism’ of the representatives of postmodernism which has a systemic attitude in the mass-media programmes.³¹ Sloterdijk puts it in the following way: “Present-day crowds, in principle, ceased to be the crowds of the meetings and they became the part of the regime in which the character of the crowd does not find its expression in the physical meeting but in the participation in the mass-media programmes”.³² Although the post-modern crowds gave up its physicality, its inertial routine. “In crowds which do not show themselves as physically gathered, one can see the loss of the feeling of one’s political potency that progresses in time”.³³ Post-modern crowds are deprived of their potential sum of micro-anarchisms and loneliness. They are a colorful, molecular miscellany which is to cover a long way to realize

²⁷ L. Koczanowicz, ‘Bachtin i Foucault o estetyzacji życia’, *Studia Philosophiae Christianae* 1 [40] 2004, p. 177 (transl. M.Ż.).

²⁸ See Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York 1979); see also Ch. Lasch, *Bunt elit*, transl. D. Rodziewicz (Kraków 1997).

²⁹ See, for example, Z. Bauman, *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień* (Warszawa 2000); J. Baudrillard *Ameryka*, transl. R. Lis (Warszawa 1998).

³⁰ See J. Baudrillard, *Precesja symulaków*, transl. T. Komendant, [in:] *Postmodernizm...*, pp. 175–189.

³¹ See D. Riesman, *Samotny tłum*, transl. J. Strzelecki (Warszawa 1996).

³² P. Sloterdijk, *Pogarda mas*, transl. B. Baran (Warszawa 2003), p. 13 (transl. M.Ż.).

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 14 (transl. M.Ż.).

the project of democratic culture. It is even more true in light of the fact that the power of state proves to be inversely proportional to the power of the media.³⁴

Freemarket fundamentalism endangers the democratic state. It suggests the deterministic concept of human nature as *homo oeconomicus*. Soros claims that the supremacy of economic values over any other cultural values implies the abandonment of the collective decision-making process and the substitution of the social bonds with transactions (global economy without global society). At the same time, the economic values alone do not suffice to maintain the social life and market proves to be unable to face the long-term tasks. The state exists on the time horizon that is larger than a private enterprise. It cannot, however, because of its weaknesses perform the function of the time guard. (It is also because his competencies in this field have been questioned after the experience of central planning in the socialist economies). There is no doubt that the choice of far-away time horizon and the care for the future generations has immense, moral significance; Guehenno says, that "the problem of price for the time forces us to get out of loneliness of individual choice which would be the purely utilitarian choice. It forces us to agree that our life does not belong exclusively to us, that it makes sense only if it belongs to specific community".³⁵ It is not known, however, how it would be able to encourage the short-sighted egoists to change the perspective and who could do it.

It shows that a weak state can be such a big threat to the open society as the authoritarian state is.³⁶ In spite of this, on the international forum it is not the care for state and democracy, but better audibility of the nation's voice and of the voice of the oppressed that get prioritized. Some theoreticians come up with the suggestion of the so called politics of differentiation that emphasizes the incompatibility of discourses among which there is a difference (Lyotard, Young³⁷), or the programme of multiculturalism and the politics of identity.³⁸ Local identities get strengthened, the authenticity is approved, the ideas of nation, community and tribe get revived. The contemporary statements of UNESCO are full of words of love, peace and understanding for various cultures. The fact that is must go along with the rehabilitation of certain forms of intolerance and xenophobia is passed over in silence. If the richness of mankind is to consist in the variation of cultures, then the mutual hostility is something unavoidable and it is to be acknowledged as a stable element of political life. It is not mentioned that the hatred is the price we need to pay to retain the systems of values of individual communities

³⁴ Sloterdijk says that in the days when the masses gathered in the space there was the rule of a chairman with whom one could identify and who, at the same time, was the embodiment of ordinariness. These masses were endangered with fascism. Currently the principle of a programme is binding and the masses burn out in the entertainment and free-market competition and in this way they fulfil the vision of 'the last man' of Nietzsche.

³⁵ J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności...*, p. 24 (transl. M.Ż.).

³⁶ G. Soros, *Kryzys światowego kapitalizmu*, transl. L. Niedzielski (Warszawa 1999), p. 17.

³⁷ See I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton 1990); I.M. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford 2000).

³⁸ See B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism. Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Harvard 2002). Ch. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton 2000); W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford 1995).

undisturbed and to secure that the communities still have the strength needed for spiritual renewal.³⁹ It seems that it is not possible to connect the call for common dialogue and universal agreement with the apotheosis of variety and cultural distinctiveness. Similarly, one cannot harmoniously intertwine the universal message of natural sciences with the relativism that is taught by the contemporary humanities subjects alert to the multiplicity of lifestyles and kinds of wisdom. “The humanities subjects mercifully dispel the illusion of affinity. They break the conversation and bring everybody home”.⁴⁰ The belief in the equivalence and parity of all cultures inevitably introduces the element of relativism into our thinking and strengthening of the cultural differences does not improve the agreement. Finkelkraut refers to this situation in critical words. He thinks that the politics cannot be limited exclusively to showing respect to any national identity, cultural specificity, spiritual and religious rooting.⁴¹ This would boil down to acknowledging that “a servant should profit from the blessings of a knout. Deprive him of the knout would mean damaging the essence, offending his human dignity, in other words – show racism. In a world deprived of transcendence, cultural identity is a guarantee of barbarian traditions which cannot be justified by God. Fanatism invoking the heavens is not to be defended, but it is not proper to criticize it if it boasts about the long tradition and its uniqueness”.⁴² “We should be ashamed of long-term ruling over the nations of the Third World. We swear it will never happen again and decide at the beginning that we will save them from the discipline of freedom in the European fashion. Out of the fear that we will lay violent hands on the immigrants, we mistake them with livery cut for them by the history. We give up their protection from the misdemeanors or abuse of tradition, and all that to let them live the way they like it”.⁴³ Glorification of cultural differences and the fight for the emancipation of the nations lead to the appraisal of the absolute primacy of community; the slavery of an individual is depicted then as the highest individual freedom.⁴⁴ Finkelkraut ultimately goes to the heritage of the Enlightenment and says, that “the European spirit of the modern times very successfully deals with the cultural and religious minorities under the condition that – the way nation does – they consist of the free and equal entities. This, in turn, results in the necessity to admit the illegality of any customs, including those rooted in the most distant history which abuse the basic human rights”.⁴⁵ Contemporarily, however, the respect to people as free and equal persons cannot find uncontroversial background in the final metaphysical or religious truth. It is either not found in any scientific knowledge either. The very presumption of the personal identity of an individual has been questioned (Foucault, Derrida,

³⁹ For the reasons and varieties of the kinds of the contemporary nationalism see E. Gellner, *Narody i nacjonalizm*, transl. T. Hołówka (Warszawa 1991); Ch. Taylor, ‘Nacjonalizm i współczesność’, transl. G. Luczkiewicz, *Transit – Przegląd Europejski*, 1 (1996), pp. 35–66.

⁴⁰ A. Finkelkraut, *Porażka myślenia*, transl. M. Ochab (Warszawa 1992), p. 99 (transl. M.Ż.).

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

Deleuze). We are in a situation which was very accurately described by Sloterdijk: 'It is where the knowledge loses its role as a foundation that is based on what is objectively real and the knowledge is not to imply anything but the centre of higher presumptions and the centre helpful in the never-ending dilemma of choice between what is lesser of two evils, that the advanced information democracy is grounded as a convent of the equally ignorant who in the mutual semi-darkness, in the sphere of tragism are looking for relatively better solutions to their relatively generalized life problems' (transl. M. Ž.).⁴⁶ In such situation the art of conversation and the ability to reach a fairly stable agreement (conversational turn) among the individuals whose identity is no longer expressed in the essentialist language gains significance' (transl. M. Ž.).⁴⁷ The awareness that we are not able to free ourselves from the presuppositions and acquire the knowledge does not diminish our need to arrange the social matters in the best possible way. That is why in spite of all the theoretical difficulties the most important issue in the philosophy of politics seems to be developing the political concept of reason and a person which will allow for keeping the basic distinctions between the totalitarian and oppressive, liberal and democratic society, between the persuasion and violence, between the justice and injustice. Philosophers such as Foucault and Lyotard obliterating these distinctions seems to close the way of political theory. Contrary to them Lévinas showing the moral sources of our culture opens the space of philosophical reflection over the contemporary society and liberal democracy. The aim of the contemporary philosophy of politics is to search for the basic principles of justice of social life and their justification (not metaphysical and not final), establishing the nature of relations between the individual and crowd, as well as pointing to the moral sources of our social life and not necessarily to its religious or philosophical (ontic, metaphysical) fundaments. The philosophy of politics, aware of its theoretical limits (among others, of the facts that it does not reach the ultimate truth and certainty, and also that it is not a complete philosophy) presupposes that some of these sources are far beyond its scope. Such source-like nature has, for example, the situation of meeting described by Lévinas in which speech and common world of senses, reason and morality are constituted. The source from which we take the knowledge about how to live is considered to be the tradition of our ancestors or a specific intellectual tradition (conservatists, communitarians), as well as the culture of the foundations which consists of a network of various plots taken from many different cultures (late Rawls, pragmatists). The source-like nature is also ascribed to the primary situation and social agreement which is recalled by such authors as early Rawls and Nozick (the Renaissance of the concept of social agreement). In the last case the considerations are limited to the philosophy of

⁴⁶ P. Sloterdijk, *Pogarda mas...*, pp. 67–68.

⁴⁷ A. Chmielewski points to the fact that Platon saw in the propely conducted wise conversation, that is dialectics, a tool to reach the unquestionable truth; currently philosophers refer to the notion of dialectics when they abolish the idea of the ultimate truth. It may be an example of a specific irony – see A. Chmielewski, *Spoleczeństwo otwarte czy wspólnota. Filozoficzne i moralne podstawy nowoczesnego liberalizmu oraz jego krytyka we współczesnej filozofii społecznej* (Wrocław 2001), p. 50.

politics, which undoubtedly is a simplification but also a considerable theoretical advantage.

We need to agree with Guehenno who notices the necessity of complying the requirements of globalization with the need to be rooted in a specific community. The author is for joining the American and European political experiences as well as disseminating the awareness of the fact that we live in a few different communities at the same time from which some are communities of a choice while others are communities of tradition.⁴⁸ He emphasizes that “it will be the people who – like stubborn craftsmen going slowly slowly and without a plan, never giving up the ambition of reason but at the same time not forgetting about the casual character of their history – will be responsible for building the institutions fitting their individual history”.⁴⁹ Hence, the road to freedom that opens for the modern people (the freedom of the postmodernists) is quite narrow. According to Guehenno we should avoid both the illusion of freedom which would be the freedom of an abstract being detached from any specific community and the illusion of the natural community which would conveniently limit our horizon”.⁵⁰ We should remember that ‘the common sphere of reason in the centre of the democratic ideal presupposes exchange and any individual defines himself in the specific attitude to the particular community, in a dialogue. The reason is a language, logos and the rational individual needed both by the theoreticians of democracy and the theoreticians of the market to develop their doctrine exists first in its attitude towards others who are not only similar to him, but also close to him.’⁵¹ After Guehenno being a democrat in a modern world consists in convincing oneself and others that each human community is a resultant of historical fortuitousness and political decisions in which the reason must express itself. “Democratic communities of the future will be the communities of reason and communities of memory, ambitious creations of our freedom and always fragile heritage of our history”.⁵²

⁴⁸ “Introducing some justice into the functioning of the market, softening its most drastic effects, making the state a guardian of time, which implies the long-term future of the national community – that is how today the minimalist programme of a faction of the left-winged European party and some of the American democrats look like”, J.-M. Guehenno, *Przyszłość wolności...*, pp. 17–18 (transl. M.Ż.).

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 136.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 150.

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**Net and Power.
An Axiological Contribution
to Net Theory and Reflection on Globalization***

Abstract

The paper focuses on those aspects of global society which justify its perception as an information or network society. The keyword describing the essence of these social changes is the Latin term *'inter'*. The network society evolved thanks to the Internet, with its users sometimes referred to as – a portmanteau of Internet and Astronaut – the Internauts. Thanks to it, the mass media became the source of interactivity, and pushed towards interconnecting everything. As a result of this development, the concept of interdisciplinarity acquired a new, special meaning. Thanks to the Internet we now face a new formula of social interaction; the processes of internalisation and interiorisation acquired a new character, and the model of exercising power and politics has undergone dramatic changed.

What characterises the so called global society? Today countless publications attempt to answer this question. There even exist classics in the domain who try to grasp intellectually this relatively young phenomenon of culture. They attempt to present it in an understandable conceptual framework in order to provide some basics for its definition; or in order to provide a ground for solving the mystery of the roots of this phenomenon; and above all in order to be able to provide some sensible predictions about the future. However, due to the plenitude of methodological approaches – which result from the interdisciplinary character of the object – it does seem to be neither easy nor attainable in the near future. Within social philosophy (so also political philosophy) one can distinguish several research paradigms. Each of them perceives the nature of globalization in a different way; offering a slightly different vision of the future; and puts different accents on the importance of the questions concerning the essence of globalisation. Taking into account a number of such distinguishing marks one may discern

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several quite distinct approaches in the so called controversy on globalisation: the physicalist approach (more precisely: mechanistic-physicalistic), the biologist approach (properly: naturalist-biologist); the Marxist interpretation (more precisely: post-Marxist, neo-Marxist); the humanistic perspective (including hermeneutic, phenomenological-dialogical, personalistic).¹ It is therefore not surprising, that one of the classics (using the term 'risk society' as his key notion) – somehow assessing the absence of satisfying approaches in this matter, claims symptomatically "whatever is understood under the concept of »globalization«..."²

This article aims to emphasise those aspects of our global society, which sometimes (and more and more often) result in naming it 'the information or network society'. I shall present the specificity of this new form of cultural reality by concentrating on the axiological basis of its functioning, in order to present a certain new model which exercises the authority we are currently witnessing. The problem is not trivial. As another analyst of contemporaneity notices, in the middle of the 80's of the 20th century, the centre of gravity in public debate moved in such a way that the principles of liberalism, the idea of market economy, the issue of diminished state interference and the notion of globalisation have become the axis of the debate. Moreover, in Western Europe "the political debate concerns almost exclusively globalisation. Among national politicians it is certainly causing fear that the global market deprive them power. This fear is justified [...]".³

The term 'network society' is used in at least two meanings: narrow and broad. In the first case it stresses the property of globalism which is a consequence of a rapid development of data communication, especially the Internet. To a certain extent it – directly or indirectly – harks back to the 'network society' – a term introduced by Manuel Castells in order to describe the kind of relationships arising from Internet communication.⁴ In a broader sense it refers to the totality of contemporary culture as a structure (a set of structures), characterized by inter-connectivity of its elements, which can be described as 'the Net'. This ascertainment is followed by a specific methodological postulate: according to the followers of the so called social network theory "analysis of contemporary social and political relations and their norms should be conducted in terms of network. For networks are everywhere. It is impossible to escape from them. Social networks are arrangements of relations and connections among people. Those connections are sustained through conversations, meetings, passing information. They arise on their own and exist through an adequate activity which sustains them. They create formal and informal orders. They are structures of communication, dependence, flows of organisational interaction. They are basically time – and space – independent. They seem to possess no limits of influence and no range of effective

¹ See J. Zdybel, *Spór o globalizację*, [in:] L. Gawora (red.), *Filozofia wobec XXI wieku* (Lublin 2004).

² 'Zaczął się wyścig cywilizacji. Wybitny socjolog Ulrich Beck polemizuje z teorią zderzenia kulturowego sformułowaną przez Samuela Huntingtona', *Dziennik. Gazeta Codzienna*, 211 (2006), p. 26.

³ 'Następny rok będzie lepszy. Guy Sorman przedstawia w *Dzienniku* swoją prognozę na temat świata w 2007 roku', *Dziennik. Gazeta Codzienna*, 211 (2006), p. 27.

⁴ See M. Castells, *The Rise of Network Society* (Oxford 2001).

influence. They are plastic systems of relations with fuzzy geographic borders and the borders of application and they are thematic-unspecified. Usually they are invisible for an outside observer".⁵

It is quite obvious that the two scopes of this notion are not exclusive, let alone competing, but they complement each other. They spectacularly meet in the remarks on the importance of teleinformation (including the Internet) for the dynamics of social life. This is why Castells in his famous work emphasises: "[even if] you do not care about the networks, the networks will care about you. For as long as you want to live in society, in this time and in this place, you will have to deal with the network society. Because we live in the Internet Galaxy"⁶ This point of view recognises the fundamental role of the Internet due to the fact that it organises flows, which "are not just one element of the social organisation: they are the expression of processes *dominating* in economic, political, and symbolic life"⁷ Buksiński seems to have a similar opinion: "the most significant example of a network in the era of globalisation is the information network. It has acquired a dominant role – the social life is organised around it. It has an influence on all domains of life and changes them, making a society the information society"⁸ because "information networks shape relationships in all other networks"⁹ A rapid development of individual and mass communication networks and almost universal access to them in the so called open societies (i.e. liberal-democratic) allow us "even speak of certain cyberspace of communication, where constant exchange of information and symbols occurs. This exchange allows the creation of a new type of society".¹⁰

As T. Buksiński remarks, not only (although mainly) social scientists and theoreticians of communication are interested in theories of social networks, but also political philosophers. The reason for it is the fact that within the approaches based on the methodology of network theory "politics increasingly appears to be a game in a space of network. Politics is one of the networks discerned. Nonetheless all networks to a certain extent have a political character, because they influence political power. [...] Power diffuses through nets and becomes omnipresent. [...] Networks are spaces, where power circulates"¹¹ At this point a philosophical approach seems to be necessary, since theories of networks do not place the researcher

⁵ T. Buksiński, *Współczesne filozofie polityki* (Poznań 2006), p. 379.

⁶ M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society* (Oxford 2003), p. 282.

⁷ M. Castells *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford 2010), p. 442.

⁸ T. Buksiński, *Współczesne filozofie polityki*, p. 379.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 381.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 379. Within the communication network, Buksiński distinguishes between media of individual communication (cellphones, the Internet) and of mass communication (TV, radio, press). In attempts to understand better the Internet in the aspect of its influence on social reality, there appear various (sometimes opposite) qualifications of this medium. However, one usually stresses that the Internet: a) is both, an individual and mass medium; b) harmoniously coexists with other tele-communication and tele-information technologies; c) has a compilatory character; d) is characterized by 'globalism' understood as border – and distance – independent. See R. Tadeusiewicz, *Spółczesność Internetu* (Warszawa 2002), p. 115.

¹¹ T. Buksiński, *Współczesne filozofie polityki*, pp. 380–381.

only in the position of a passive describer, merely reporting the global facts. Practically almost every analytical study of globalisation is not axiologically neutral, sometimes even normatively oriented. Those attitudes are present – in those kinds of works – on the occasion of universal listing on one hand of ‘profits’, ‘chances’ or at least ‘hopes’ resulting from the globalisation of the cultural space, and on the other – the already existing ‘costs’ and expected ‘threats’. So generally speaking, one refers to the cultural (civilizational) ‘challenges’ that humanity – each one of us – and social science is facing.

Certainly any qualification of a particular phenomenon as having advantages or disadvantages from globalisation and their hierarchisation do not only depend on the individual preferences of a researcher, but also on the discipline it represents. This is also true of network theories. Referring to the narrow understanding of the term ‘network’ one can express a concern that the Internet depersonalises or even reifies its users, when it reduces an individual to ‘a node or a terminal’. At the same time one can indicate an advantage of this situation as leading to some kind of network egalitarianism, where the role of an individual is not determined by her real position in society, but by their abilities and skills of arising in the information space.¹²

So ultimately “the political role of the Net is ambiguous. On the one hand it democratizes societies, since they overcome borders, allow contacts without censorship, provide access to information, and decentralize relations of power. They allow freedom and ensure inclusion. One even says that they create a soft rule as opposed to a hard rule by a state based on military power. Those are the information networks within which anti-globalists, demonstrators, and opponents of a large business organise themselves. On the other hand this freedom is limited and inclusion is not the same for everybody. Some do not have access to the Net due to their financial status; others are limited due to their position in the Net. The code of the Net and the position that one has there limits the scope of possible actions. One needs to obey. Access to the Net is access to power. But not every position in the Net gives equal access. Both in formal networks operating according to the law and in informal ones there are informal, comrade, and clique relations. Networks hold strangers off”.¹³

Thus, my goal is to bring attention to those issues which are extremely important from an axiological (so philosophical) point of view: to the issue of freedom and limitation as well as to that of inclusion and exclusion (‘separating from strangers’). Both Castell’s and Buksiński’s observations are well expressed by this famous phrase by Pericles: “Just because you are not interested in politics it does not mean that politics is not interested in you.” In both cases one aims to stress – if we may say so – an ontic unavoidable engagement of an individual in particular aspects of cultural reality. Today these two aspects (politics dominated by networks and information networks are founded to a great extent on *The Internet Galaxy*) are braided into one whole – the Global Net. This existential situation of every one of us depends on the place and position one has in this net.

¹² Cf. *ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 380–381.

A proper introduction to my considerations shall be provided by the ideas – today already classic – of Margaret Mead. I refer to her opinion expressed within the confines of the discussion on social-cultural transformation in her work *Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap*¹⁴ published in the 70s of the 20th century. Providing a certain scheme (and schemes as we know tend to be oversimplified) encompassing civilisation and cultural changes, Mead stresses one of the social consequences of the avalanche acceleration in information flow. This consequence has indeed an axiological dimension.

According to M. Mead traditional society was dominated a certain type of culture called postfigurative. The so-called descending generation – the generations of parents and grandparents – played an essential role. They were the source of knowledge for younger generations (the ascending generations), especially their knowledge on values to the effect that younger generations were copying their views on the world. In short, there was a time in the West, when tradition was the point of reference as a criterion for proper thinking and acting. Knowledge passed-on to the ascending generation by the descending one was existentially indispensable. These types of values and information transfer provided the young with the feeling of stability – it allowed them a proper orientation in the axiological nuances of social life, since it was the generation of grandparents and parents which was an uncontested source of knowledge on the world (on the system and hierarchy of values, life ambitions, choices and goals, principles of performing certain political roles etc.) for children and grandchildren. Significant changes occurred within the industrial society. A new type of culture appeared, called by Mead ‘configurative’. Characteristic for this society there was a phenomenon that generations started to exist somehow side by side. This coexistence was based on mutual tolerance, accompanied however by a graduate departing. Basically the issue was that those standards and values passed along in the traditional way in a family became depreciated. Young people started to draw and adopt information about the world and patterns of behaviour – to such an extent that it was decisive for their way of thinking and acting – from their coevals and media.

According to Mead an annunciator of the next cultural form (sometimes called the post-Industrial or Information) was a rise of counterculture – youth movements of the 60s. In a certain sense they initiated the prefigurative culture. It was formed by “unknown children”.¹⁵ Older generations were forced not only to recognise the independence of younger ones, but also to adopt and repeat the grounds for attitudes and actions adopted by ascending generations, the generations which quickly adapt to the rapidly changing technological conditioning of life.

Three years after Mead’s work was published Daniel Bell¹⁶ presented an extensive study of the changes taking place in contemporary society. He stressed the importance of the impact of technological development on the totality of social life, and by doing so he took a place in history as the creator of the conception

¹⁴ See M. Mead, *Culture and Commitment. A Study of the Generation Gap* (New York 1970).

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

¹⁶ D. Bell, *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York 1973).

of postindustrial society.¹⁷ The follower of Bell is Alvin Toffler, a futurologist, drawing on Bells's ideas of the three-stage cultural and civilizational change. His essentially publicist works (especially *Future Shock*, *The Third Wave*, but also he published with his wife Heidi *War and Anti-War*, and *Creating a New Civilization. The Politics of the Third Wave*¹⁸) were – and still are – read and commented upon. No doubt they are classics of the problematics. Both Bell and Toffler (or rather the Tofflers) brought up the issue of a special significance of knowledge in the post-industrial society. According to Bell knowledge became a kind of commodity. He suggested that the post-industrial society should be called the 'knowledge society'. Toffler in turn believes that knowledge (as the main value) becomes an immaterial capital, whereas information – a substitute for materials and labour force. Let us stress, that the discovery was not new and what was at stake was not a claim concerning the substitute as such, but its value as an essential condition of the success of one's venture. Already in 19th century Rockefeller commented that the most important for his efficient acting (in business) is information – a commodity for which he pays the most. In other words, knowledge, information and innovations are factors which allow us to save resources, time, energy, space, means of transportation, etc.

Over time one started to use various notions to describe this new stage of civilizational development. There appeared new terms like 'post-industrial society', 'post-Fordism', 'local law society', 'economy of the knowledge society', 'society of an informed mind', 'information society'¹⁹. The last term was used first by a Japanese, while a more profound conceptualisation of it was done by an American Fritz Machlup.²⁰ He indicated that what started to be the axes of the information society are: the mass media; the system of education; science institutions; libraries and data banks. Already in the 1970s those branches acquired the name 'the knowledge industry'. So the source of economic power became the ideas and information created and provided by people, whose creativity was elevated to the status of the most important factor of development.

Moreover, what is also characteristic for an information society is extremely rapid development of means of communication, transmitting and organizing information as well as an extensive social demand for all kind of information. Yet, this is not only the case of the quantitative growth of information, but that information made a qualitative change in social life. This new society is fascinated with technology and its achievements and it has become technology-dependent. It achieved its current status through the microelectronics revolution, which initiated the process of informatisation in the areas of production and services. Generally – informatisation has conquered our life.

¹⁷ See A. Siciński, *Styl życia, kultura, wybór. Szkice* (Warszawa 2002), pp. 148–149.

¹⁸ Cf. A. Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York 1970); *Idem, The Third Wave* (New York 1980); A. i H. Toffler, *War and Anti-War. Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, (Boston 1993); A. i H. Toffler, *Creating a New Civilization. The Politics of the Third Wave* (Atlanta 1995).

¹⁹ Cf. W.A. Kamiński, *Globalne społeczeństwo informacyjne: Nadzieje, szanse, zagrożenia* (Zamość 2000), p. 6.

²⁰ See A. Mattelart, *Spółeczeństwo informacji* (Kraków 2001); K. Krzysztofek, M.S. Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój. Od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych* (Katowice 2002), p. 171.

However, information is – as one says – an ungraspable commodity. It does not fit former schemes, especially economical ones. Thus, there is a problem with determining its ontic and axiological status: the same information can potentially be everywhere; can have a different value in various contexts; and can acquire meaning and importance when related to other pieces of information, etc.

The next stage, or maybe being only a mutation of the information society is – using Castell's term – the network society. This society is a fact. It does not matter whether we are aware of that or not, whether we agree to this or not, it already exists and is growing. Now one should not speak so much about the *information society*, but about the *informatics society* or “e-society”.

What changed significantly when the network society arose? Above all the hierarchy of economic structures started to fall. This process was called ‘Gate-sism’ (from Bill Gates²¹). We may say the domino effect occurred. One change entailed another, this in turn others, etc. Dehierarchization was followed by decentralization. Those changes were aided by management technology. The Internet diminished the significance of the so called ‘intermediate links’ which were supposed to transmit information from up to down within the system, while raising the number of communication channels and making the vertical contacts universal.

Yet, if information is the main resource and knowledge has a special value, then not only are the vehicles of information important, but also the intellectual potential and creativity of those who create, distribute, and receive information. Indeed in practice within the information network almost every one of us is at the same time a creator, distributor and recipient of information. This allows people to accumulate knowledge carried by information and to transform it into a tool of controlling the world to a greater extent than previously. Information became an instrument of acquiring power together with influence and the struggle for domination.

From Castell's point of view the information revolution played the key role in the reorganisation and the change in the structure of capitalism in the 1980s. It turned out that capitalism reinforced the spirit of informationalism. In the meantime countries of the Eastern Bloc for various reasons neglected this – as it turned out – historical, social and economic challenge. This resulted in the fall of communism.²²

What is informationalism then? What does its politicisation power consists of? Its essence lies in the development of the human capacity to process information, what became possible only through the information revolution and its main force – a rapid development in microelectronics. Generally changes in the informatic sphere of technology seem to confirm F. Bacon's claim that “Knowledge and human power are synonymous”.²³ Informationalism popularises technological development, and for the most part, information technologies. It stresses its peculiarity consisting in activating the creative capacities of its users. So the distinction into users and creators of new technologies, into creators of goods (information and

²¹ K. Krzysztofek, M.S. Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój...*, p. 190.

²² See M. Castells, *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford 1997).

²³ F. Bacon *The Great Instauration*, tran. B. Montague (Philadelphia 1854), p. 345.

knowledge) and services disappears. In effect the difference between particular domains of human life and acting also fades.

Castells summarises that there are five characteristic features of 'information capitalism': "Information is the most valuable commodity"²⁴

1. Because information is an integral part of all human activity the pervasive effects of new technologies characterise the new paradigm.

2. Any system or set of relationships using the new information technologies are impelled to a networking logic.

3. The information paradigm is based on flexibility. In a society characterised by 'constant change and organisational fluidity' the distinctive feature of the configuration of the new paradigm is its ability to reconfigure.

4. The convergence of specific technologies into a highly integrated system. "Micro-electronics, telecommunication, opto-electronics and computers are now all integrated information systems".²⁵

Ultimately the most important spheres of social activities are constituted by: technology, knowledge, economy and politics. As W. Sztumski stresses: "each of the components of this quadrupole evolves in its own way and has reached a certain level of intensity, and through this evolution led (although each one separately) to a certain state of crisis and gradually became alienated. As a result they got out of control. [...] Yet, the current situation is that we are dealing not only with the alienation of technology, knowledge, economy and politics, but with the alienation of all couplings among them".²⁶

Due to the specificity of the contemporary process of alienation, the Internet (a computer and the Internet) dominated each sphere of life to an extent never seen before. "Yet, in spite of the pervasiveness of the Internet, its logic, its language, and its constraints are not well understood beyond the realm of strictly technological matters. The speed of transformation has made it difficult for scholarly research to follow the pace of changes with an adequate supply of empirical studies on the whys and wherefores of the Internet-based economy and society".²⁷

I think that there is a specific term-key, which characterises best the essence of the changes within this new social reality – Latin term *inter* ('between', 'among', 'in the midst of', 'mutually'). Also the development of the Internet – with its users called 'internauts' – was a ground for the existence of the network society. Only its application triggered the interactivity of media and its users and contributed to interconnectivity – the connection of everything with everything – and its interdisciplinary acquired significance. Moreover, the Internet allowed a new formula for social interactionism, due to the fact that the new processes of internalisation and interiorisation acquired a new character.

How does the issue of internalisation look in the case of an individual functioning within that new social formula, who is internalising and subjectivising

²⁴ M. Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Malden-Oxford-Chichester 2011), p. 84.

²⁵ K. Doogan, *New Capitalism? The Transformation of Work* (Cambridge 2009), p. 51.

²⁶ W. Sztumski, *Filozofia przeżycia w warunkach globalnych zagrożeń*, [w:] *Filozofia wobec XXI wieku*, pp. 37–38.

²⁷ M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*, p. 3.

information taken from outside? Internationalisation is one of the mechanisms of the socialisation of an individual. Yet, in the context of the network society it gains a special dimension. Jan van Dijk noticed that organisation of virtual societies is preconditioned by experience, dependencies and structures in the real world. "People take the reality they know with them, as a kind of baggage, when they surf the Internet and take part in virtual communities"²⁸

Interiorisation – so adopting values and exemplars together with social and cultural norms by an individual – is a complex process. A 'surfing' individual belongs to two societies. The first one is a real community – here they are obliged to observe certain traditional limitations (for example codes of conduct). The second is virtual community characterised – at least on the background of the former one – by openness, liquidity and a relative lack of censorship. This is the Internet and the Net which allowed creation not only of new social interactions, but also of new communities named by Howard Rheingold 'the Virtual Communities'²⁹ People living in those communities "use words on a screen to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People living in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries"³⁰

One may say that in such communities there exists a different allocation of emphasis. The meaning of time-space determinants becomes weaker. The inter-generational boundaries which are determined by certain age limits or territorial bonds are not important any longer. However, the sense of community based on the unity of interests increases.

It is universally known that internauts do not use the Internet exclusively to look for information. More and more often they use this means to find a company. *De facto*, it involves the search for social contacts, satisfying the need to belong to a group. This is obvious, yet the question whether this phenomenon is a search for boundaries which were lost as a result of the 'loneliness in the crowd' or atomization of social life arises. There is no easy way to answer this question, because those new forms of communities quite often distance themselves from traditional cultural, political or national limitations. Virtual communities also allow the functioning of all kinds of minorities, which cannot sustain open social relationships within traditional societies.³¹

So, what does the specificity of new interactions within a virtual community consist of? Firstly, it is characterised by the ease of entering and leaving it. For even if community bonds among members seem to be strong, they are in fact,

²⁸ J. van Dijk, *The Network Society* (New York 1999), p. 160.

²⁹ H. Rheingold, *The Virtual Community. Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (New York 1994).

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

³¹ Cf. K. Doktorowicz, *Spolecznosci wirtualne – cyberprzestrzeń w poszukiwaniu utraconych więzi*, [in:] L.H. Haber (red.), *Spoleczeństwo informacyjne. Wizja czy rzeczywistość?*, vol. I (Kraków 2004), pp. 59–66.

weak. We may say that this kind of community is unstable. There even appeared a quite significant term 'exchangeable friends'³² which indicates this phenomenon.

We must stress here that an axiological attractiveness of virtual communities manifests itself by satisfying the need for two very desirable values. The first one is freedom which is realised here in the form of freedom of speech and free access to various communities. The second (resulting from the anonymity of 'surfers') is social equality and equity – unless one is excluded from a given community for a reason.

The rise of the Internet (and networks) seems to demand a redefinition of reality due to the fact that the borders between reality and the simulation of this reality exists no more. Any frequent and prolonged participation in the simulation of reality led to the acceptance of the simulation as more real than the original. Using a metaphor we may say that we have multiplied Plato's cave. So from a cognitive and axiological point of view our situation is even more dramatic than the one described in Plato's *Republic*. Existing within this virtual world we feel more and more at home, since we are not only in contact with mere imitations, but with perfect imitations. We do not therefore find an axiological motivation to depreciate this virtual reality.

With reference to J. Baudrillard's observation we may recognise, that "we live in this »hyperreality«, created by a mediumistic reflection. We do not experience events, but their reproductions – copies repeatedly »made from originals«. Within this »desert of hyperreality« fata morganas dominate over the real oases. Logocentrism is replaced by phonocentrism and imagocentrism. Reality and hyperreality constitute the biverse. Where one cannot distinguish anymore what is real and what is not, does it really make a difference to which world one can refer: the real one or the one created by media?"³³

One claims, that a human inhabiting this 'biverse' is forced to change the code of communication, because "in mass impacts the era of the »ideologists« ends, and the time of the »imagologists« comes".³⁴ Gradually not ideas but images become more important. This new situation demands increased vigilance, because it opens the door for extensive manipulation based on the phenomenon observed already at the end of the 19th century by G. Le Bon, and related to the popularisation of *politicalness* (democratization of politics caused by 'penetration' politics by common people). So according to Le Bon "A crowd thinks in images, and the image itself immediately calls up a series of other images, having no logical connection with the first. We can easily conceive this state by thinking of the fantastic succession of ideas to which we are sometimes led by calling up in our minds any fact. Our reason shows us the incoherence there is in these images, but a crowd is almost blind to this truth, and confuses with the real event what the deforming action of its imagination has superimposed thereon. A crowd scarcely distinguishes

³² See J. Mikułowski Pomorski, *Kultura jako komunikacja w społeczeństwie sieci*, [in:] *Spółczesność informacyjna...*, p. 96.

³³ K. Krzysztofek, M.S. Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój. Od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych*, p. 202.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 207.

between the subjective and the objective. It accept as real the images evoked in its mind, though they most often have only a very distant relation with the observed fact”³⁵

Let us assume, that Le Bon was right in his diagnosis of the ‘souls of the crowd’. So how does it manifest itself today in the information society? I think that we may employ here these disturbing yet suggestive remarks by H. and A. Tofflers. They claim, that the previous (in a society before the Industrial Revolution) way to make events known distant in time and space “brought distant places and times into closer focus and gave a “you and there” quality to what purported to be news. The world was pictured as objective and “real”. By contrast, Third Wave media are beginning to create a sense of unreality about real events. Early critics of television lamented its immersion of the viewer into a vicarious world of soap opera, canned laughter, and false emotions. These concerns will seem trivial tomorrow, because the new media system is creating an entirely “fictive” world to which governments, armies, and whole populations respond as though it were real. In turn their actions are then media- processed and plugged into the fictional electronic mosaic that guides our behaviour. This growing fictionalisation of reality is found not only where it belongs, in sitcoms and dramas, but in news programs as well, where it may promote the deadliest of consequences. This danger is already being discussed around the world. The Moroccan newspaper *Le Matin*, in Casablanca recently carried a thoughtful essay quoting the French philosopher Baudrillard, to the effect that the Gulf War came across as a gigantic simulation, rather than a real event. “Media-tisation”, the newspaper agreed, “reinforces the fictive character” of events, making them seem somehow unreal”³⁶

Let us go back to Le Bon, who recommended an authority which is interested in controlling the democratised political space – taking the ‘soul of the crowd’ into consideration – to employ ‘modern magic’ in calming down the crowd or to agitate it. Le Bon was talking about controlling public opinion with suggestive ‘words-images’, certain ‘idols’ or ‘big words’, which have the power to move the imagination of the masses, and at the same time, the words are ambiguous or simply equivocal (like: liberty, equality, democracy, justice, brotherhood), or words with ‘beautiful façades’, etc. Only this kind of social engineering is effective, because the crowd does not distinguish words from things; actually it considers words as things, and the “words whose sense is the most ill-defined are sometimes those that possess the most influence”.³⁷

If we take a closer look at the contemporary ‘elaboration’, ‘staging’ or ‘planning’ of public opinion³⁸, it is clear that Le Bon was right, and that the condition in which contemporary culture is in (as the Image Culture) promotes the imagological actions. However, as we may think on the basis of Toffler’s remarks, the

³⁵ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind* (Minneapolis 2006), p. 33.

³⁶ A. Toffler, H. Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Making Sense of Today’s Global Chaos* (New York 1995), p. 173.

³⁷ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd...*, p. 99.

³⁸ See K.R. Popper *Public Opinion and Liberal Principles*, [in:] K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (London 1963).

idea of Big Brother, so visible in Le Bon's recommendation, is outdated. On one hand Big Brother understood in one way or another has received powerful weapons (press, radio, TV, the Internet) to influence public opinion. On the other hand it also undergoes a process of being imagined in a certain way, and moreover, the democratisation of the informatic space renders it immune to ideological controlling. So even the power of the so called 'nodes of networks' do not have an omnipotent character. For even if the participants of the nodes have real influence on the masses, they are not capable of distinguishing the real reality from the one created by media.³⁹ Let us assume that this is the case, even if there exists an opposite view supporting the eternal idea of over-power, which has a chance to be fulfilled due to those new – never before existing – tools for the manipulation of public opinion.⁴⁰

One way or another, it is justified to speak about a new modern form of power. Achievements in the domain of informatisation contributed to some changes within the area of the economy and to profound social and political transformations. There appeared a new mechanism of social structuralisation – new elites started to develop. Some researchers (like Castells) speak of 'technoelites', others (like Richard Florida) bring our attention to 'cognitariat' – the so called creative class.⁴¹ Within the class one can find scientists, architects, designers, teachers, musicians, entertainment creators, advertising people and consulting agencies. E. Bendyk drawing on the findings of R. Florida on conquering the job market in the United States by this class and on the rapid increase of its participation in the national income of the USA stresses: "Today, in the beginning of the 20th century, the creative class, even though it is not the largest class – since the number of creators [38 million people – J.Z.] is smaller than the 55 million service workers (working in McDonald's, gas stations and as bank cashiers) – it is the most influential and it decides about the direction and speed of social development. The hegemony of this new creative class has profound consequences. The economic development to a lesser and lesser extend hinges upon an access to financial capital, instead availability of brains becomes the condition of good prospering".⁴²

This privileged position and particular kind of work demands special skills from 'cognitarians'. They have to possess not only extensive knowledge, but also constant access to information and creatively engage the imagination. "If an individual and mass imagination is to develop, it must be exercised and exercised in every way: inventics, innovatics, ekistics [a branch of knowledge investigating

³⁹ "There are leaders within networks, that is those who have the most profound influence on the network. They usually are the nodes of the greatest power. They are the ones who are joined by new participants. As an example we may give TV presenters, bureaucrats of the European Union, Pentagon in the military network or the White House in the political one. [...] The points of contact of different nets (nodes) have a privileged place in terms of power. Who owns them, has the power. They employ many codes and have the greatest influence on society"; T. Buksiński, *Współczesne filozofie polityki*, pp. 380–381.

⁴⁰ See L. Zdybel, *Idea spisku i teorie spiskowe w świetle analiz krytycznych i badań historycznych* (Lublin 2002), pp. 452–459.

⁴¹ Cf. M. Niezgoda, *Spółczesność informacyjna w perspektywie socjologicznej: idea czy rzeczywistość?*, [in:] *Spółczesność informacyjna...*, p. 123.

⁴² E. Bendyk, *Niezapowiedziane rewolucje*, p. 11.

future surprises – J.Z.], forecasting, especially scenario and futurology, various analytical techniques, computer simulations, virtual-reality technologies, etc.; let alone *belles-lettres*, especially science fiction. This exercising of the imagination should be institutionalised within those e-societies in a form of organisational units generating ideas, innovations, future scenarios, *et al.* [...]”⁴³ Let us recall another, and recent very popular term – ‘meritocrats’. According to a futurological conception by the English social scientist M. Young, the 21st century will basically be a period of the domination of people competent in a profession or a domain of knowledge. We shall even be dealing with meritocracy.

So it seems, that the categories and terms like ‘e-society’, ‘knowledge society’, ‘availability of brains’, ‘technoelites’, ‘cognitariat’, ‘meritocracy’, ‘inter-...’, ‘information capitalism’, etc. refer to an entirely new phenomena – they describe a social reality which was never encountered before.

Meanwhile M. Castells, an insightful analyst of technological revolution claims: “In this general sense, society has not changed much”.⁴⁴ This seems to be a paradox, but only apparently. It is because those categories have only a descriptive sense. Their evaluative character seems to be accumulated in the context of a famous pair of numbers ‘20:80’. This pair acquired a permanent position in the literature on globalisation when the shape of the future is described. Future is supposed to be reduced to those numbers. At least this is what the so called Fairmont pragmatists think. They believe that in our century the world economy can flourish thanks to only 20 percent of people capable of working. The work of this group of people (in the area of producing goods and providing specialised services) is sufficient to satisfy global needs. But this entails, that only this 20 percent can live a life of an adequate standard: to have a satisfying participation in income and consumption. The remaining 80 percent – as Jeremy Rifkin euphemistically formulates – shall have big problems and shall constantly search for work. It can be presented in a more dramatic form that leaves no illusions: let us imagine the Hamlet of the future; his dilemma will be: to eat or to be eaten.⁴⁵

This future’s vanguard already exists in the form of new mechanisms of exclusion. ‘The Knowledge Society’ demands significant changes. The mechanism of social exclusion was always based (together with financial status) on a deficiency of certain abilities within a group of people. Today this aspect becomes of utmost importance, especially because there is a certain transvaluation in the system and hierarchy of so called ‘useful jobs’. This means, that those whose skills do not allow them to find a proper place in this new reality may be candidates for the 80 percent.⁴⁶

As we can see this common mechanism of exclusion is not a new phenomenon. Its essence is still the same and it has similar consequences. An individual who

⁴³ L.W. Zacher, *Od społeczeństwa informacyjnego do społeczeństwa wiedzy (dylematy tradycyjne: między informacją, wiedzą i wyobraźnią, [in:] Społeczeństwo informacyjne...*, vol. I, pp. 107–108.

⁴⁴ M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*, p. 275.

⁴⁵ Cf. H.-P. Martin, H. Schumann, *The Global Trap: Globalization and the Assault on Prosperity and Democracy* (London 1997).

⁴⁶ S.W.A. Kamiński, *Globalne społeczeństwo informacyjne...*

did not have the skills to adjust to the new conditions of life always had a feeling of being unsafe, was in a way isolated and even was excluded from society. Thus, when Castells speaks of the unchanging principles governing social life, he speaks of the fact that today to a large extent, the Internet is responsible for this exclusion. The Internet is universally considered to be a freedom-aiding technology. But this 'technological freedom' has a second, less attractive face, "it can free the powerful to oppress the uninformed, it may lead to exclusion of the devalued by the conquerors of value".⁴⁷ The network society carries a potential danger of creating a new class and a global division, because there is more to it than just the growing gap between rich and poor. The division concerns those who have access to the net and those who do not. "The world is fast developing into two distinct civilizations: those living inside the electronic gates of cyberspace, and those living on the outside"⁴⁸

This 'technological freedom' is not free from another negative phenomenon, which always occurred in a situation of easy access to information. With a sharp increase in the amount of information (together with more means of using them) the effect of the information overload has occurred. It manifests itself in a phenomenon suggestively named 'information flood', which to a large extent is caused by 'junk information'. All of it led to 'data smog'. This indicates a certain paradox resulting from the fact that an information excess, just like a deficiency, can distort the functioning of individuals and societies. The amount of available information is not a benefit in itself, but can also be a thread manifesting itself through the so called 'cognitive chaos'. Here the following theses seems to be relevant: "information can be worth nothing if is not integrated with knowledge. Not everybody can handle it, therefore – as it turns out – a kind of intermediate person is still necessary. The demand for those people is still growing, but they have competitors in the »technological middlemen« – more and more intelligent devices, which select and manage information"⁴⁹

Let us set aside the issue of so called 'intelligent devices' and concentrate on people. Devices are also designed and programmed by a human being. The character of authority within 'the knowledge society' is undoubtedly decided by the idea of 'knowledge as a commodity'. So, as it was already shown by I. Illich several decades ago (when he recognised as a syndrome of our times the fact that knowledge has a value as a commodity), knowledge is protected on all possible levels. "Patents are protected by corporations, secrets are guarded by bureaucracies, and the power to keep others out of private preserves – be they cockpits, law offices, junkyards, or clinics – is jealously guarded by professions, institutions, and nations"⁵⁰ The issue here does not merely concern keeping people in the state of ignorance for the sake of ignorance, but it is about gaining various kinds of profits – military, scientific, politic or economic. Ignorance of the one group is the

⁴⁷ M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*, p. 275.

⁴⁸ J. Rifkin, *The Age of Access. The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life is a Paid-For Experience* (Tarcher 2001), p. 13.

⁴⁹ K. Krzysztofek, M.S. Szczepański, *Zrozumieć rozwój...*, p. 192.

⁵⁰ I. Illich, 'The Alternative to Schooling', *Saturday Review*, June 19 (1971), p. 48.

condition *sine qua non* for the other's profit. Thus, it was natural, and it probably will remain, that certain privileged people deny the others access to certain information and knowledge – today maybe even more than in the past.⁵¹

The philosophical-normative analysis of the global, and network society results in ambivalent opinions on its presence and future. Castells offers us an optimistic prognosis, that – maybe – virtual realities shall allow us to have a better level of life, including the political one: “But our lives are not determined by general, transcendent truths but by the concrete ways in which we live, work, prosper, suffer and dream. So, to act upon ourselves, individually and collectively, to be able to harness the wonders of the technology we have created, find meaning in our lives, better society, and respect nature, we need to place our action in the specific context of domination and liberation where we live: the network society, built around the communication networks of the Internet”⁵² But maybe Castells is wrong, and – how Beck claims – it is not good, that ‘a stranger is close by’ – and through tele-information, she is too close? Several dramatic events of the last few months – oddly ‘unifying’ humanity – where media played an infamous role (for example the global consequence of ‘local’ publishing of Mahomet caricatures) show, that “what can become common for most of the inhabitants of the Earth is a longing for a world which would be at least a bit less united”⁵³

Translated by Rafał Lizut

⁵¹ See E. Reimer, *School is Dead: Alternatives in Education* (New York 1970).

⁵² M. Castells, *The Internet Galaxy*, pp. 275–276.

⁵³ *Zaczął się wyścig cywilizacji...*, p. 26.

Aesthetics

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**Duty and Beauty.
Evolutionary Ethics in Relation
to the Darwinian Aesthetics^{*1}**

Abstract

Metaphysics, or the knowledge of what there is, has been traditionally placed at the pinnacle of philosophical hierarchy. It was followed by theory of knowledge, or epistemology. Practical knowledge of proper modes of conduct, ethics, came third, followed by aesthetics, treated usually in a marginal way as having to do only with the perception of the beautiful. The hierarchy of philosophical disciplines has recently undergone a substantial transformation. As a result, ethics has assumed a central role. The aim of this paper is to suggest that the hierarchy of philosophical disciplines is not yet complete and that one further step needs to be taken. According to the claim advocated here, it is not metaphysics, epistemology, or ethics, but aesthetics that is the first and foremost of all philosophical disciplines. This claim is argued for by references to findings of evolutionary aesthetics, especially to Charles Darwin's idea of sexual selection as elaborated in *The Descent of Man*. I also argue that Darwinian approach to morality is, and should be, derivable from a Darwinian aesthetics which lies at the core of his conception of sexual selection.

Transformation of the Philosophical Hierarchy

At the beginning of the past century Sigmund Freud has famously remarked that human self-esteem had suffered three great blows. The first of them had been dealt by Copernicus who established that earth is not at the centre of the universe,

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¹ A draft of this paper has been read during a conference “Darwin's Impact on Ethics. Past and Present. Multidisciplinary Seminar in Commemoration of the Bicentennial of Darwin's Birthday and 150th Anniversary of *Origin of Species*”, University of Wrocław, Poland, May 19, 2009. Final version of the paper owes a great deal to the participants of the seminar, especially to professors Francisco J. Ayala (Irvine University), Andrzej Elżanowski and Bogusław Pawłowski (both from the University of Wrocław). I am most indebted, however, to David W. Miller (Warwick University), for his critical and pertinent reading of the paper.

“but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system of scarcely imaginable vastness”; the second one came from Darwin who had invited mankind into the animal kingdom by demonstrating our “ineradicable animal nature”; the third one was a result of the discovery of the Unconscious which brought about the awareness that the conscious and rational ego is fact the servant of the unconscious and uncontrollable forces residing in human mind. (Out of modestly, Freud ascribed this discovery to Arthur Schopenhauer.)

The philosopher of science, Imre Lakatos, introduced a distinction between two kinds of scientific research programmes: progressive and degenerative ones. Despite 150 years since the publication of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*,² the programme initiated by Charles Darwin shows no signs of degeneration. On the contrary: it continues to inspire such a great host of new theories and ideas that it certainly deserves the name of a progressive programme. “Since Darwin’s time, the evidence supporting his theories has become stronger and more comprehensive. The virtually unlimited supply of evolutionary information encoded in the DNA sequence of living organisms allows evolutionists to reconstruct all evolutionary relationships leading to present-day organisms, with as much detail as needed. If you invest the necessary resources (time and laboratory expenses) and you can have the answer to any query, with as much precision as you want. Evolutionists are no longer concerned with obtaining evidence to support the fact of evolution. Rather, evolutionary research nowadays seeks to reconstruct more and more details about evolutionary history and to understand further how the process of evolution occurs”.³

We may gauge the fertility of the programme by reflecting upon the developments in science inspired by his theory, especially in the science of man. It inspired Herbert Spencer in his rather questionable assertions concerning the “natural”, and thus desired social order; it has become a background of the evolutionary theories of cognition, language, economics and ethics. There is even an evolutionary theory of cosmic self-therapy, which argues that the damage effected by humans upon the Earth, diagnosed as *Disseminated Primatemaia*, will generate a healing response, if not a revenge on the perpetrators.⁴

The transformation mentioned by Freud has left indelible marks on the traditional hierarchy of philosophical disciplines, even if sometimes belatedly. Originally, metaphysics, the knowledge of what there is, has been placed at the pinnacle of the philosophical hierarchy. Aristotle gave it the name of the first philosophy and was followed in this by generations of philosophers for nearly two millennia. Second came the theory of knowledge, or epistemology. Practical knowledge of proper modes of conduct, ethics, came third, followed by aesthetics, which has

² Ch. Darwin, *The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York 1979), pp. 459–460.

³ 5 Questions for Francisco Ayala on Charles Darwin and His Legacy, [in:] <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2009/02/an-interview-with-francisco-ayala-evolutionary-biologist-britannica-contributor-on-charles-darwin-his-legacy/>; accessed May 11, 2009.

⁴ J. Lovelock, *Gaia. The Practical Science of Planetary Medicine*, (Oxford 2000); also J. Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia. Earth’s Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity* (New York 2006).

been usually treated in a rather marginal way, as having to do only with the perception of the beautiful.

This traditional hierarchy was challenged during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, especially by Descartes, Hume and Kant. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant maintained that in virtue of the structure of human cognition which he presented, we are not in a position to assert for certain the existence of anything in the external world; he compared his discovery to the Copernican revolution. Having deposed metaphysics from its throne, Kant firmly established the priority of the theory of knowledge. He also attached greater importance to both ethics and aesthetics, though they still retained a secondary status *vis-à-vis* epistemology.

The ancient hierarchy was revived for a while in a new form by Bertrand Russell who, in *Principles of Mathematics*, had attempted to accomplish a deduction of the whole body of knowledge from a parsimonious set of ontological assumptions, influencing in this way a number of thinkers, most notably Ludwig Wittgenstein. A post-modernist rebellion in the 20th century against the traditional philosophical hierarchies, inspired to a significant extent by the work of the mature Wittgenstein who repudiated most of his earlier philosophy, has effected a significant reversal. The next steps in this deconstruction deprived the knowing subject itself of its epistemologically privileged, transcendental position. It has been argued that human cognition is affected, both in its content and adequacy, not only by the external world, but also by social, political economic, and cultural, i.e. moral factors. This led to a conviction that the knowing subject should be seen as dependent in its cognition upon multifarious influences, and indeed it is constituted by them. As a result, ethics came to be considered the first philosophical discipline.⁵

Toward the end of the past century Richard Rorty, incontestably the most popular philosopher of the world of that time, had stressed the importance of Darwin's work to philosophy by saying that it behoves us to "give the self-image Darwin suggested to us a whirl, in the hope of having fewer philosophical problems on our hands".⁶ The aim of this paper is to suggest that the evolution of the hierarchy of philosophical disciplines is not yet complete, and that one further step needs to be taken. My argument is based on a claim, outlined elsewhere,⁷ that it is not metaphysics, epistemology or ethics, but aesthetics is the first and foremost of all philosophical disciplines. I shall attempt to demonstrate this claim by helping myself not so much to Charles Darwin's idea of natural selection, proposed in *The Origin of the Species*, but rather to his idea of sexual selection, elaborated in *The Descent of Man*. I shall attempt to show the legitimacy of the Darwinian approach in morals in an indirect way. I shall argue that a Darwinian approach to morality is, and should be, derivable from an Darwinian aesthetics which lies at the core of

⁵ A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals. Why Human Beings Need the Virtues?* (Chicago-La Salle 1999).

⁶ R. Rorty, *Hilary Putnam and the Relativist Menace*, [in:] R. Rorty, *Truth and Progress, Philosophical Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge 1998), p. 48.

⁷ A. Chmielewski, *The Gaze and Touch in the Public Space. Toward the Political Aesthetics*, [in:] *Wrocław Non Stop. Urban Space* (Wrocław 2008), pp. 84–92.

his conception of sexual selection. In other words, I would like to give a new whirl to the philosophical image of humans, by drawing on some of Darwin's ideas.

Duty and the Natural Selection

Having finished several chapters of *The Descent of Man*, Charles Darwin went to Wales for a holiday. He met there a notorious women's rights campaigner, Ms. Frances Power Cobbe. He shared with her the view that men's superiority versus women can be explained by means of the idea of male's struggle for the possession of females; the imperative of possessing females by males endows them with vigour and courage, and even organs, that females lack; for these reasons, in comparison to males, females may be considered "under-evolved". In her response Ms. Cobbe has lent Darwin a book by Immanuel Kant, apparently in a hope of winning him to the idea of the equality of sexes. Even though Darwin remained unconvinced as to the equality of sexes, and expounded a very Victorian view of morality in this regard, Kant's book inspired him to provide a provisional answer to the question of the origins of morals.⁸

In *The Critique of Practical Reason* Immanuel Kant expressed his wonder as to the power and origins of moral duty: "Duty! Thy wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, not by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so exerting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence thy original?"⁹ This Kantian question has been treated by most philosophers with such a great deal of veneration that few dared to answer it in a way which would depart from Kant. The genius and courage of Charles Darwin lies in the fact that he took up this question, and that he answered it in a revolutionary manner.

His answer is formulated in a strictly scientific way, according to the principle of parsimony in scientific explanation, established by Pierre-Simon Laplace. As a well known anecdote has it, Laplace wrote a five volume book on the solar system, *Celestial Mechanics*, without mentioning God. When Napoleon asked him: "Monsieur Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator", he answered: "I have had no need of that hypothesis". Even if it has become possible, ever since,

⁸ J. More, A. Desmond, *Introduction*, [in:] Ch. Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London 2004), pp. xlvii–xlvi.

⁹ Darwin quotes these words of Kant's in *The Descent of Man* (p. 120) from *Metaphysics of Ethics*, transl. by J.W. Semple (Edinburgh 1836), p. 136.; the quote, however, comes from the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), rendered by L.W. Beck (I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (New York 1993) p. 90) in the following way: "Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating but requirest submission and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening aught that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but only holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience) – a law before which all inclinations are mute even though secretly work against it: what origin is worthy of thee, and where is the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kinship with the inclinations and from which to be descended is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men alone can give themselves?" (Polish transl. by J. Gałęcki (Warszawa 1984), pp. 142–143).

to explain the workings of the physical nature without invoking God's name, few ventured to explain the human world without reference to religious concepts. This was done by Charles Darwin who, in response to Kant's question, wrote: "[A]ny animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections being included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well, or nearly as well developed, as in man".¹⁰ In his work he had shown that human morality may be explained without reference to the action of non-natural factors or the interference of supernatural beings. His explanations had no need for that hypothesis.

Opposition

From the very beginning Darwin's ideas were met with hostility from the people of the Church. Among the outspoken opponents of evolution was Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford, who debated Thomas Huxley, "the Darwin's bulldog", challenging him to say whether he claims to have descended from a monkey through his father or mother. For this Huxley took a belated revenge when Wilberforce, an excellent horse-rider, lost his life after having been shaken off from by his ride the very moment he boasted to his companion, Lord Grenville, about his masterly horsemanship, his head hitting a stone. Huxley reportedly commented upon the incident by saying: "For once, reality and his brain came into a contact and the result was fatal".¹¹

Huxley, an eager disciple of Darwin's, diverged significantly from his master by arguing that human nature, being a product of the natural world, "red in tooth and claw", is essentially evil. Morality, according to Huxley, is an exclusively human invention aimed to combat and to control selfish and competitive tendencies; even if evolutionary processes would not have been possible without them, they have to be tamed in order to make a peaceful and orderly human society possible. "[T]he practice of that which is ethically best – what we call goodness or virtue – involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence. It demands that each man who enters into the enjoyment of the advantages of a polity shall be mindful of his debt to those who have laboriously constructed it; and shall take heed that no act of his weakens the fabric in which he has been permitted to live. Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life

¹⁰ Ch. Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, pp. 120–121. Almost immediately he relativised this claim by saying that it does not mean that any social animal would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours, more or less in the same way as various animals do have a sense of beauty, though they admire very different objects.

¹¹ D. Adrian, M. James, *Darwin* (New York 1991), p. 601.

of something better than a brutal savage".¹² He concluded: "Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it".¹³

In this way Huxley has separated ethics from evolution, making it impossible for the science of biology to have any say about the emergence of human morals. His approach, however, has an important drawback, for within his perspective one would have to abandon the principle of parsimony observed by Darwin in the explanation of human world, by postulating some extra-natural factor responsible for the generation of moral rules.

Morals in Nature

Despite Huxley's claim, a number of studies in socio-biology and evolutionary psychology have successfully attempted to demonstrate that it is possible to explain the emergence and operation of human moral rules, including altruism, sacrifice, justice, love and equality, i.e. the concepts and categories which constitute the essence of human morality, by appealing to principles outlined and suggested by the Darwinian understanding of evolution.¹⁴ A great number of empirical studies have shown, for example, that Darwin was right in saying that "any animal whatever", having developed social instincts and mental faculties in a sufficient degree, develops also well defined rules regulating their mutual relations, and that these rules resemble those which are in force among humans. The study of primates have demonstrated that some of them, most notably chimpanzees, orang-utans and capuchins, are displaying altruistic capabilities by sharing food, entering reciprocal exchange transactions, and behavioural expectations. For example, a chimpanzee contender for the alpha position is winning popularity within his group by acquiring food and distributing it among his potential allies, to which they normally would not be able to have an access. An undeniable practice of food sharing among primates has been interpreted as a part of the system of mutual obligations, as in the subordinate adult male chimpanzees' grooming of the dominant alpha male in exchange for an undisturbed mating session or, as among bonobos, an exchange of food is a form of winning sexual favours or as an act of status enhancement.¹⁵

The primates have also been shown to be capable of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconciliation. "Especially after a serious conflict between two adult males, the two opponents sometimes were brought together by an adult female. The female approached one of the males, kissed or touched him or presented herself

¹² T. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, scanned and edited by T.D. Gowan for Project Gutenberg, <http://manybooks.net/>, accessed May 10, 2009, pp. 80–81.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

¹⁴ Among the most popular ones are M. Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue* (London 1996; Polish transl. Poznań 2000); M. Ridley, *The Red Queen. Sex and the Evolution of Human Nature* (London 1993; Polish transl. Poznań 1999); R. Baker, *Sperm Wars* (New York 1996; Polish transl. Poznań 1999).

¹⁵ J.C. Flack, F.B.M. de Waal, *Any Animal Whatever'. Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes*, [in:] L.D. Katz (ed.), *Evolutionary Origins of Morality* (Thoverton 2000), p. 5.

toward him, and then slowly walked toward the other male. If the male followed, he did so very close behind her [...]. When the female sat down close to the other male, both males would start to groom her and they simply continued when she went off”.¹⁶ They are also capable of showing empathy, sympathy and consolation in distress. De Waal has interpreted these data in the following manner: “Inasmuch as every member benefits from a unified, cooperative group, one expects them to care about the society they live in, and to make an effort to improve and strengthen it [...]. Continued infighting, particularly at the top of hierarchy, may damage everyone’s interests, hence settlement of conflict is not just a matter of parties involved, it concerns the community as a whole. This is not to say that animals make sacrifices for their community, but rather that each individual has a stake in the quality of the social environment on which its survival depends. In trying to improve his quality for their own purposes, they may help many of their group mates at the same time. A good example is arbitration and mediation in disputes, standard practice in human society – courts of law serve this function – but recognizable in other primates as well”.¹⁷

Sexual Selection

Among things that natural selection, based on the concept of the survival of the fittest, cannot explain, is the notorious peacock tail which certainly does not enhance the survival chances of its owner but positively reduces them. Yet, despite the tenets of natural selection, it is there; as Darwin wrote to his friend Asa Grey: “The sight of a feather in a peacock’s tail, whenever I gaze at it, makes me sick”. Since the complexity of some animal features could not be explained by means of natural selection alone, Darwin came up with the idea of sexual selection. He elaborated this conception in order to fill a lacuna left by his concentration on natural selection in his *Origins*.

A large share of living beings propagate themselves by means of a mechanism known as sex. The biological fact of sex as a means of reproduction, or at least some of its aspects, continues to be mysterious for biologists since sex involves a significant paradox: “benefits of sex are not so obvious as its costs”.¹⁸ There have been many theories attempting to explain why, despite the costs involved in sexual propagation, it has evolved at all. According to the now received view, sexual propagation is a more beneficial mode of reproduction than asexual one because nonsexual organisms are capable of producing only exact copies of themselves. Thus, in case of a change in the environment from hospitable to non-hospitable to the organisms in question, they, together with their offspring, lose a chance of survival and all become extinct.

In contrast, sexual propagation, even if very costly, enables generation of more diverse offspring. “If we consider two organisms differing only in that one is sexual and the other not, the sexual does not survive to reproduce any better than the asexual one. In fact, given the costs of finding a mate and otherwise being sexual,

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 14–15.

¹⁸ R.E. Michod, *Eros and Evolution. A Natural Philosophy of Sex* (Reading 1995), p. 4.

a sexual partner may actually be worse off in terms of surviving and reproducing than an asexual one. However, having a diverse group of offspring, a sexual partner may end up with more surviving offspring than an asexual one. If, for example, the habitat becomes colder, only the offspring with heavy fur coats may be able to survive. Even if this type did not exist in the population, two sexual parents may have a chance of producing it through chance recombination of their genes".¹⁹ Eventually sex, however pleasurable it may happen to be, does not benefit the individuals involved in the sex themselves, but only their offspring, and with them, the whole species by increasing a chance of its survival. A modified version of this "variation view of the sex" asserts that sex is really not for parents, offspring, or even for organisms: "The most basic biological consequence of sex is not even reproduction but rather the health and preservation of the genes, or DNA molecules, carried by organisms that practice sex".²⁰ The benefit of sex lies in its cleansing and rejuvenating effects of the DNA molecules which are in charge of our biological constitution.

Social animals, primates included, are, as a rule, sexual, which means that they propagate by means of sexual intercourse. As sex is of a paramount importance to the survival of living beings, and since reproductive sex is necessarily a social intercourse, it is of utmost importance for them regulate the sexual traffic. Among reasons for this is the fact that not all effects of sexual intercourses have the rejuvenating and cleansing effect, e.g. the incestual ones. No wonder, then, that sex has always been a subject of the elaborate systems of control and regulation. Many studies demonstrate that social animals, in order to survive, have to regulate their social behaviour in this most important aspect of their biological life.

It has been suggested that a rule which may have been crucial in establishing specifically human culture, has evolved due to the fact that some primates became capable of regulating their thus far promiscuous sexual behaviour. According to this theory, formulated on a basis of the comparison of humans and chimpanzees, females living in a group have established a rule of their sexual inviolability during menstruation period, forcing in this way the males to find another occupation for themselves during that period, for example collecting food to be consumed jointly after the period of untouchability has ended. Furthermore, this practice, apart from being conducive to food procurement and thus survival, has also the effect that it leads males to be more monogamous. In this way they are forced to participate not only in the conception of the offspring, but also in its rearing, which further increased the chances of survival of thus evolved pre-humans. A key role in this has been played by the evolved mechanism of menstrual synchrony among pre-human females which enabled them to form mutual solidarity ties in their relation with males: "Females" became "women" when finding themselves in "situation-dependent solidarity [...] collectively drew on their own biological resources to give their menstrual blood its collectively constructed 'meaning' as a symbol of their inviolability. The consequent rule against rape was the first

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

cultural rule and the foundation on which all other rules were built”.²¹ In other words, thus evolved females made the pre-human societies more egalitarian.

Sex and Senses

According to Aristotle, all humans strive for knowledge, which is demonstrated by their love of senses, “especially the sense of sight”.²² In other words, humans are not only sexual, but also sensual beings. Most of all, however, they are visual beings. Darwin devoted much attention to the role of sensual perception in the regulation of animal sexual behaviour. Having touched upon the topic in *The Origin of the Species*, he spent much more time investigating this problem in *The Descent of Man*. Something which fully deserves the name of evolutionary aesthetics plays a fundamental role in his conception of sexual selection.

It is evident that for Darwin sexual selection is an aesthetic selection. “Sexual selection implies that the more attractive individuals are preferred by the opposite sex”.²³ “When we see many males pursuing the same female, we can hardly believe that the pairing is left to chance – that the female exerts no choice, and is not influenced by the gorgeous colours or other ornaments with which the male is decorated”.²⁴ “When we behold a male bird elaborately displaying his graceful plumes or splendid colour before female..., it is impossible to doubt that she admires the beauty of her male partner. [...] [W]ith great majority of animals,... the taste for the beautiful is confined, [...] to the attractions of the opposite sex”.²⁵ In his analyses of behaviour of many species of animals, including humans, Darwin repeatedly remarked upon the fact that differences in their ornamentation and looks are essential for the constitution of their sense of beauty. “If all our women were to become as beautiful as the Venus de Medici, we should for a time be charmed; but we should soon wish for a variety; and as soon we had obtained variety, we should wish to see certain characters a little exaggerated beyond the then existing common standard”.²⁶ Darwin stresses also the role of olfactory properties and vocal performances in mating of many species, birds,²⁷ mammals,²⁸ and humans as well.²⁹

The visual, or more generally, perceptual display, performed by males for the benefit of females, is nothing but a demonstration of their desire. Male’s demonstrated desire works in such a way as to excite a desire in female. From this it follows that the crucial role in reproductive success, which is a good striven for

²¹ C. Knight, ‘The Bloodiest Revolution’, *Tikkun. A Bimonthly Jewish Critique of Politics, Culture & Society*, May/June (1992), p. 89. Knight’s conception, drawing on P. Turke’s evolutionary theory of sexuality, has been developed in his *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (Yale 1991).

²² Aristotle, *Methaphysics*, 980a.

²³ Ch. Darwin, *Descent of Man...*, p. 375.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 375.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 135.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 652.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 407–408.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 588.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 632–635.

by each living being, is played by an ability to make oneself noticed by a possible mate. In this way we may be able to understand that the good of the survival promised by sex, and the beautiful, are intimately intertwined.

The theory of sexual selection and the role played by visuality in sexual species – let us here remark that the meaning of the Latin word *species* refers to the look, appearance and depiction – enabled Darwin to explain both the promiscuity and lack of discrimination of their partners on the males' part, as well as reticence of females and their stronger discrimination in selection of partners for mating. "[M]ales of almost all animals have stronger passions than the females. Hence it is the males that fight together and sedulously display their charms before females; and the victors transmit their superiority to their male offspring".³⁰ Males are by nature more promiscuous and less discriminatory, and they will rarely refuse a union with any partner which makes herself available: "the male is generally eager to pair with any female".³¹ This is due to the fact that it is in their interest to propagate their genes as widely as possible. Females, in their turn, are both more reticent in their demonstrations of desire and much more choosy, for the burden of rearing the offspring resulting from sex is usually left to themselves only. Yet they are not immune to desire, nor quite helpless; they have a great power of exerting a choice for one among the suitors: "they can tempt the men whom they prefer, either before or after marriage".³² From this we may infer that, at least among humans, very few males will be able to contain themselves when confronted by a skilful demonstration of desire on the female's part: few things are more arousing for human males than a demonstration of female's desire. We may also add that few things are more putting off for a human male than female's ridicule of him, or her demonstration of dislike or repulsion of him.

It is worth stressing that, according to Darwin, the females' choice is dictated to them by their ability to discriminate the best, i.e. most healthy and promising male from the array of contenders to their sexual favours, the goodness of the partner being assessed by her primarily on the basis his looks or his other outward features. In this way, again, we see a close connection between sensuality and sexuality: an ability to perceive is of paramount importance in our orientation in the space of possible sexual relations, in the same way as it fundamental to our orientation within physical space³³. It appears, then, that the very concept of beauty that has been ingrained by nature in sexual animals is instrumental in organising and regulating their reproduction and survival, and thus is the most rudimentary form of biophilia.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 236.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 261.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 668.

³³ The intimate relationship between vision and sexuality has been argued for by S. Freud in *The "Uncanny"* (*Writings on Art. And Literature* (Stanford 1997), pp. 193–233): "A study of dreams, fantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration – the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*" (*ibidem*, p. 106).

³⁴ The concept has been formulated by E. Fromm in his *The Heart of Man* (New York 1964) and subsequently developed by E.O. Wilson in his *Biophilia* (Cambridge 1984); see also E.O. Wilson, S.R. Kellert, *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington 1995).

Evolutionary Aesthetics

Our sexuality made us social beings. Our sensuality played a crucial role in regulating both our sexuality and our sociability: it made us moral beings. It should not surprise us, then, that the fundamental connection between the beautiful and the good has been recognised by the Ancient Greeks who used the expression of *kalokagathia*, which signified for them what is beautiful and good, also as a term of moral approval. In their deep wisdom the Ancient Greeks had seen the beautiful and the good as originally and inextricably intertwined. The close relationship between the good and the beautiful is still retained in some languages, as it is demonstrated by some usages of the adjective “beautiful” instead of “good” in many languages, Polish among them.

Attempts to recover this original connection between the good and the beautiful within the evolutionary theory, known as bio-aesthetics or evolutionary aesthetics, are relatively recent.³⁵ They have enabled us better to understand the human proclivity to engage in the activity known as art which is as ancient as humans themselves.³⁶ The most comprehensive and sophisticated attempt to argue for the validity of Darwin’s ideas to the understanding and interpreting of human arts has been formulated by Denis Dutton.³⁷ Dutton’s book is a systematic, comprehensive and most refined of the latest conceptions in evolutionary aesthetics understood as the evolutionary philosophy of arts.

Its beginning is highly interesting. Two Russian artists, Vitaliy Komarov and Alexandr Melamid, living in the US, have supervised a global survey on human aesthetic preferences, run in ten different countries, geographically distant from each other. According to the results of the survey, most people questioned, irrespective of the place of their education, tended to demonstrate aesthetic fondness of a spacious landscape which included representation of greenery, water, animals and humans. The landscape which attracts universal aesthetic approval consists of an open space covered by low (or mowed) grass, interspersed by trees and bushes; there is also in it a natural water reservoir, like a pond or a lake; at least on one of its sides the landscape opens a vista toward a distant horizon; it also includes evidence of the presence of animals and birds, various plants, including fruit plants and flowers.

In 1993 both artists have presented a painting entitled *America’s Most Wanted* which, according to their research, reflected the most universal tastes of the Americans. (They have created similar paintings for other countries³⁸). The interpre-

³⁵ According to E.O. Wilson, they were pioneered by G. Smets in her *Aesthetic Judgment and Arousal. An Experimental Contribution to Psycho-Aesthetics* (Leuven 1973), but already T. Huxley has written that “Some day, I doubt not, we shall arrive at an understanding of the evolution of the Aesthetic faculty” (*Evolution and Ethics...*, p. 80). An interesting programme of evolutionary aesthetics has been outlined by A. Comfort in *Darwin and the Naked Lady. Discursive Essays on Biology and Art* (New York 1962), where he claims that “there can be a biology of art, as there is a biology of digestion and of motoring” (*ibidem*, p. 2).

³⁶ Cf. e.g. E.O. Wilson, *Consilience. The Unity of Knowledge* (New York 1998), ch. 10. Cf. also, e.g. E. Voland, K. Grammer (eds.), *Evolutionary Aesthetics* (Heidelberg 2003).

³⁷ D. Dutton, *Art Instinct* (New York 2009).

³⁸ Photographs of their paintings may be viewed at: <http://www.diacenter.org/km/homepage.html>.

tation of the survey, together with satirical paintings created by artists, which caricatured what may be seen on almost every wall calendar, have caused a great debate among aestheticians and philosophers of art; the debate was focused upon the problem of relativism and universalism in understanding of art and its canons.

Dutton argues that human reactions to landscapes, puzzling in their universality, are a symptom of deeply ingrained atavisms in human beings, formed in them in the period of Pleistocene, i.e. from 1,8 million to 11 thousand years ago. In this great time span, whose length may be conveyed by the fact that the oldest known records made by humans are barely five thousand years old, one species of the primates, *Homo erectus*, has been transforming itself through a protracted evolutionary process into human species. Those instincts reflect deeply rooted preferences of the hominids which played crucial role in their survival in these evolutionary distant times. "Preferred landscapes are characterized by coherence and legibility: terrain that provides orientation and invites exploration. A sense of a natural or man-made path is the most common cue for exploration, along with a surface that is even enough for walking. Appealing landscapes frequently center attention, therefore, on a riverbank that disappears around a bend or a walking path that leads into hills or down to a fertile valley. Provision of a focal point or glimpse of a horizon increases the intelligibility of a scene, and hence visual appeal".³⁹ Such views offer a "prospect and refuge",⁴⁰ i.e. things of importance for the survival of creatures which are to become humans and which only recently have learned to walk on the hind limbs; thanks to this achievement their front limbs could have been employed to purposes other than walking.

On the basis of the collected evolutionary facts and his knowledge of the prehistoric and historic art, Dutton argues in favour of the universality of human aesthetic tastes, connecting them with the universality of challenges for human survival and with the developing human capability of understanding how to achieve aims conducive to survival. Among universal features of art Dutton lists the imaginative capabilities of creators embodied in their works; ability to excite emotions by means of their works; and technical skills of the artists; ability of the created work of art to please the spectator, etc. All this has become possible because that one species of the primates has adopted the erected mode of walking. This development has been possible also because of the rapid increase of the volume of its brain, more than three times larger than the brain of the most intelligent of all other primates; this growth has occurred during the period of a climatological and geological relative stability, characteristic of the Pleistocene.

In his evolutionary-aesthetic speculations Dutton devotes much space to the pleasure taken by humans in telling stores, true and fictitious; the joy drawn from telling and listening to stories is common among the most primitive and the most sophisticated people, the young and old. In this context it is worth reminding that the fundamental role of story-telling in human life has been noticed by Alasdair MacIntyre; in his moral philosophy he formulated the narrative conception of human self which stresses the regulative, in moral sense, character of the narratives:

³⁹ D. Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, s. 21–22.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, s. 22.

“[M]an is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. [...] Hence there is no way to give us understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology, in its original sense, is at heart of things. Vico was right and so was Joyce. And so too of course is that moral tradition from the heroic society to its medieval heirs according to which the telling of stories has a key part in education us into the virtues”.⁴¹

From the perspective of Dutton’s evolutionary aesthetics there are no obstacles to acknowledge the validity of MacIntyre’s claims. Dutton, however, goes further and claims that both artistic structure of such narratives, as well as their themes, testify to the evolutionary background of human capability and their need to tell stories: we tell to each other about universal problems of “life, death, adventure, family conflict, justice, and overcoming adversity”,⁴² in order to record, first in speech, then in writing, actions and strategies which played important role in human struggle for survival with nature. They are more or less distant echoes of collective human endeavours to survive.

The role and content of the stories told, however, cannot be reduced to the knowledge indispensable for survival. An important aspect of understanding of art outlined by Dutton is the role played in the evolution not only the natural selection, described by Darwin in his work on origin of the species, but also the sexual selection which is the theme of his book on the origin of man. It is the Darwinian idea of sexual selection that enables him to explain the richness and diversity of forms and features of life in nature, something which could not have been explained by his earlier idea of the natural selection. Similarly Dutton argues that sexual selection is responsible both for the amazing ornaments of the creatures endowed in this way by nature, but also for the fact that it finds among humans a continuation in human desire to decorate themselves as well as their environment in order to arouse the interest of potential sexual partners and to attract their attention, and themselves. In other words, art is one of the most important factors organizing human sexual traffic which means that it takes part in regulating this key sphere of human life, and, in consequence, of many other spheres of human life represented in works of art which tell stories about most important human problems.

It may be said that Dutton’s naturalist perspective is capable of explaining the evolved need for art which accompanies humans from the moment they emerged and which played an immensely important role in their evolution. It would seem also that such a perspective, even if it is capable of explaining the primitive, folk or popular art, will be unable to explain what we call the high art. Yet Dutton faces this challenge as well; the concluding chapter of his book contains an excellent and persuasive explanation of features of the greatest human masterpieces from

⁴¹ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame 1984), p. 216 (Polish transl. *Dziedzictwo cnoty. Studium z teorii moralności*, trans. A. Chmielewski (Warszawa 1996), pp. 383–384).

⁴² D. Dutton, *The Art Instinct*, s. 5.

a point of view which remains both naturalist and evolutionary. According to the narrative in this chapter, nobility and greatness of the works or art, which have been placed by Clive Bell on the “cold and white peaks of art”, may also be explained by reference to deep human instincts formed during the Pleistocene, and ingrained in human nature by forces of nature and social factors which, on the one hand, were formed in the pre-human herds on the basis of the encoded instincts and, on the other, have modified and amplified them.

It is worth reminding in this context Richard Shusterman’s project of pragmatist aesthetics. Shusterman, like Dutton, argued in favour of a unified understanding of art; his approach enabled him to recognise products of both high and low culture as genuine works of art. His essay on *Fine Art of Rap*⁴³ is a bravado argument in favour of this claim. The fact that both Shusterman and Dutton have reached similar conclusions has a distant yet I believe an important reason in the fact that the pragmatist philosophy – including John Dewey’s philosophy of art, which has been an important inspiration for Shusterman – has evolved under Darwin’s influence.

This account of the main argument of Dutton’s book does not do full justice to its richness and charm. For Dutton has included in his work, among others, an interesting definition of art which is an outcome of a critical reflection upon other such definitions; he also defined in a clear way the phenomenon of kitsch; he pointed out features which makes us qualify some works of art as genuinely great; he also included into his narrative fascinating stories of the forgers of art and diagnosed the sources of their mischievous success. Dutton’s book is undoubtedly excellent, for it is masterly written and is a testimony to his immense erudition in art – high and low, elite and popular one – as well as to his excellent knowledge of Darwin’s ideas which form the core of his argument. One has to remember, however, that his approach, as the approaches adopted in most of the books written in the English-speaking countries, is informed by the specific meaning of the term “aesthetics”, deeply ingrained in the English language usage. Specificity of this usage delimits the meaning of the term “aesthetics” to the domain of art. There is, however, another tradition which perceives aesthetics as a domain of reflection upon all aspects of the perceptible, and all functions played by perceptibility in the life of human beings. I am personally in favour of this second, much wider understanding of aesthetic reflection; for this reason I would like to draw attention to the issues which are not taken up by Dutton though he often touches upon them.

In this context it has to be remembered, however, that the ability to perceive beauty cannot be confined to the ability of perceiving beautiful objects belonging to the world of arts. Perception of beauty has never been innocent. On the contrary, the rules establishing the ideal of beauty are one of the most repressive means of control in social relations. For beauty has its other, negative side, ugliness. Ugliness, in a strict analogy to beauty, never works as a term of aesthetic

⁴³ R. Shusterman, *Fine Art Of Rap*, [in:] R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living Beauty, Rethinking Arts* (Oxford 1992; Polish transl. *Estetyka pragmatyczna. Żywe piękno i refleksja nad sztuką*, trans. A. Chmielewski et al. (Wrocław 1998)).

only, but of moral disapproval as well. We may appreciate its power by realising that those who are not aesthetically liked are branded as ugly, and, as a consequence, are not chosen, and often actively scorned and rejected. This leads not only to their sexual frustration, but also to their social denigration. Reciprocally, it generates misogyny or misandry, as the case may be, and sometimes leads, on the part of the rejected, to violent revenge for having been rejected. Eventually it may also lead to the extinction of the genetic line of those unfortunates who were not fancied by anyone. In this sense the aesthetic ideal of beauty has not only an intrinsic moral, but also a social and political dimension.

One has to stress also that, against Darwin's Victorian view of femininity, women have always been conscious of the power invested in them by both their ability to say "no" to men, as well as by the effect which a demonstration of their desire exerts upon them. Rules sanctioning their power over men are known to have been spontaneously established in all cultures.⁴⁴ In the civilised world, the traditionally accepted ways of demonstration of the female desire are now being additionally enhanced and controlled, standardised and diversified, yet most of all ruthlessly exploited by the fashion, cosmetics, popular music and pornographic industries. Moreover, due to their extensive use of the ubiquitous audiovisual media, the demonstration of female desire – male desire being perceived by our predominant culture as too obscene to be publicly depicted – is intensely and extensively employed in advertising, and is being put to work to enhance the aims of a variety of businesses. This adds an important economic dimension to evolutionary aesthetics.

Challenges and Inspirations

Darwin's evolutionary theory continues to be challenged as an inadequate explanation of the world of nature and humanity, especially by the advocates of creationism and followers of its more refined version, intelligent design theory. The Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn has intervened against a view that the Roman Catholic Church has acquiesced in the acceptance of evolutionary theory or that its perennial teaching has somehow become compatible with evolution: "Evolution in the sense of common ancestry might be true, but evolution in the neo-Darwinian sense – an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection – is not. Any system of thought that denies or seeks to explain away the overwhelming evidence for design in biology is ideology, not science". Invoking the Catechism of the Church, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, Archbishop Schönborn reminded the faithful that the evolution of living beings, of which science seeks to determine the stages and to discern its mechanism, presents an internal finality which arouses admiration. "To speak of chance for a universe which presents such a complex organization in its elements and such marvelous finality in its life would be equivalent to giving up the search for an explanation of the world as it appears to us. In fact, this would be equivalent to admitting

⁴⁴ S. Blaffer Hrdy convincingly challenged the Darwinian Victorian view of women as by nature passive and monogamous in her *The Woman that Never Evolved* (Cambridge 1981; Polish transl. Warszawa 2005).

effects without a cause. It would be to abdicate human intelligence, which would thus refuse to think and to seek a solution for its problems".⁴⁵

It has been argued⁴⁶ that the creationist beliefs can essentially be reduced to four claims. The first claim asserts, rather unsurprisingly, the existence of an omnipotent God. According to the second, even if the explanation of development of life has been elaborated more or less adequately by Darwin, it is God who has directed or otherwise intervened in the natural processes through which every living species has come about. Thirdly, creationists and Intelligent Design advocates agree that the human species has certainly been designed and created by God, and that it is an unfounded claim to assert that humans may have evolved from humanoid ancestors. The above claims are supported by the fourth, most interesting one, according to which some beings, humans especially, are endowed with irreducible complexity which could not have been the outcome of the purposeless and contingent processes of natural selection of creatures which turn out to be the fittest to survive in a changeable environment. In an elaborate analysis of the latest attempts to reconcile the scientific, i.e. Darwinian explanations of the natural world, with a variety of religious outlooks, Jerry A. Coyne concluded that "[a]ttempts to reconcile God and evolution keep rolling off the intellectual assembly line [...] because the reconciliation never works".⁴⁷

Interestingly, however, the evolutionary theory has been claimed to be inadequate not only by religiously inspired writers but also by a number of scholars of other persuasions. Most notably Karl Popper, the philosopher and methodologist credited with having provided the best available criterion for scientificity, namely the principle of falsifiability, once argued that Darwinism is not falsifiable, and thus is unscientific.

According to Popper, Darwinism is a theory which enables us to explain how it came about that the great variety of forms of life, some of them very complex and refined, have originated from very few of them, possibly even from a single, very primitive organism. Evolutionary theory capable of explaining the generation of a multitude of forms of life from a very limited number of them (he calls it an evolutionary tree of life) is based, according to him, on four hypotheses. The hypothesis of heredity asserts that offspring of all living creatures resemble "fairly faithfully" their parents. The claim of variation allows for the occurrence of "small" variations in the offspring. The hypothesis of natural selection asserts the existence of a mechanism of control of the offspring by the elimination of the unfit; one of its consequences is that, given the relative stability of the environment, only small variations, caused by small mutations, are allowed to survive, whereas the monstrous mutations turn out, as a rule, unfit and thus lethal. The fourth element of Darwinism according to Popper is the claim that variability is being kept with some limit by natural selection.

Popper went on to say that Darwinism, as it methodologically stands, is not testable because it is unable to predict the outcome of the processes it assumes

⁴⁵ C. Schonbörn, 'Finding Design in Nature', *New York Times*, July 7 (2005).

⁴⁶ J.A. Coyne, 'Seeing and Believing. The Never-ending Attempt to Reconcile Science and Religion, and Why It Is Doomed to Fail', *The New Republic*, Wednesday, February 4 (2009).

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

to be taking place in nature, and for this reason it cannot really explain them. Darwinism is “disappointing” in its predictive and explanatory power for it does not explain in a “scientific way” the phenomenon of adaptation. He says that our usage of the terms “adaptation” and “selection” is that we can say that if a species were not adapted, it would have been eliminated by natural selection. And if a species has been eliminated, it must have been ill adapted to the conditions. Adaptation or fitness is defined by modern evolutionists as survival value, and can be measured by actual success in survival, and “there is hardly any possibility of testing a theory as feeble as this”.⁴⁸

Despite his own criticisms, Popper awarded Darwinism the status of a meta-physical research programme and claimed that Darwin’s theory is invaluable. It has been for him invaluable to the extent that he called his own ideas – in epistemology, methodology, and the philosophy of language – “evolutionary”.⁴⁹ Following in Darwin’s footsteps he claimed, for example, that from amoeba to Einstein is just one step, the difference being that amoeba, if commits a mistake in its tentative moves within its world, will be eliminated, whereas humans, thanks to their evolved capabilities, their capability to reason especially, will be able to allow their misguided hypotheses to be eliminated in their stead.

We are thus justified to conclude that Popper’s methodological misgivings against Darwinian theory have best been answered by Popper himself.⁵⁰ We are justified too in saying that Darwin’s open framework for an explanation of the emergence of humans has provided us with effective tools to explain human reason as a wholly natural phenomenon, and how it may have evolved unaided by anything but natural forces.

Darwin concluded his *Origin of Species* on a very aesthetical note: “There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one: and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, are being, evolved”.⁵¹ There indeed is an unsurpassed grandeur in his view of humans as beings crafted by natural forces alone.

⁴⁸ Cf. K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest. An Intellectual Autobiography* (Chicago 1976), pp. 167–180.

⁴⁹ Cf. K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford 1979), especially chapters 2 and 7.

⁵⁰ In fact, Popper, has explicitly retracted his view concerning the alleged unfalsifiability of the theory of evolution; cf. his *Natural Selection and Its Scientific Status* being his First Darwin Lecture delivered at Darwin College, Cambridge, published in *Dialectica*, 32 (1978), republished with minor omissions in *Popper Selection*, edited by D.W. Miller (Princeton 1985, pp. 239–246). Francisco Ayala has informed me that Popper’s views on the methodological status of the theory of evolution, expressed in his *Unended Quest*, have been strongly criticized during a conference organized by Ayala and Theodore Dobzhansky in late 1960’s, to which Popper has been invited.

⁵¹ Ch. Darwin, *The Origin of the Species...*, pp. 459–460.

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The Anthropology of Picture. The Reason to History of Picture*

Abstract

Thanks to the expansion of the new media the modern aesthetics have faced the necessity of redefinition of the picture, its meaning, functioning in the antroposphere, relation to what it represents, presents and refers to. The new technologies generating the mechanical pictures have disturbed the certain, lasting for centuries, tradition in comprehension the picture. The new media have assigned a different order of icon-type comprehension, it has introduced the different semiotic codes describing the relation between the reality, its picture and memory. They are responsible for the drift of oral-written culture and entering into the visual culture. The visual character of modern culture is based mainly in the invention of photography. The invention of photography is a key moment to the rise of the new media and a huge changes on the art grounds.

As the result of new media expansion¹ the redefinition of picture, its meaning, place in culture, functioning in antroposphere, relation to what it represents,

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¹ The media experts have not so far developed a common definition of new media. There is no agreement when the new media originated (L. Manowich claims the development of universal new-media machine which is computer to be the origin for new media, but the post-Luhan school claims it is the invention of daguerreotype and the possibility of mechanical reproduction of picture), as well as recognizing specific inventions. The reason for multiple definitions of new media may be also the fact of multiple terminologies used in a definition such as a mean, medium or carrier. T. Globan-Klas while referring to contemporary definitions of new media recognizes minimum six different meanings of a term mean in the context of new media (mean understood as a natural language used in order to communicate, a mean in a semiological comprehension as all language and beyond-language signs such as mimics, gestures, dress code, a mean understood as a code (both Morse alphabet and traffic lights), a mean as a material signal carrier (both air vibrations or light waves as well as paper, film reels or CD-rom), a mean understood as material instruments allowing transmitting and receiving and also carriers allowing duplication of transmission and the mean as many different institutions creating the transmission) (*vide* T. Goban-Klas *Komunikowanie masowe: zarys problematyki socjologicznej* (Kraków 1978), p. 78). A certain solution to this semantic multi-meaning is J. Bolter's and R. Grusin's proposal to limit definition of medium to something which remediates, that is transforms and changes

presents and what it refers to has become necessary in aesthetics. New technologies generating mechanical pictures have disturbed the certain tradition that for many centuries governed the tradition of picture comprehension. The new media have developed a different order of iconic comprehension, they introduced different semiotic codes describing relations between reality, its picture and memory. They are responsible for withdrawal from oral-written culture and entering into the visual culture. The visual sketch of modern culture, according to one of the biggest media theoreticians M. McLuhan, requires re-definition of a term civilization. "The term 'civilization' should now be used in technical sense, in relation to the unfortunate man who had lost his tribal appurtenance and to whom the visual values are superior in his way of thinking and behaving".²

The visual character of modern culture is rooted mainly in invention of photography. The photography and its capability of multiplication of picture has caused a big expansion of picture in a form of photographs, posters, leaflets, magazines, advertisements and others. The photography at its very beginning strongly corresponded to technological revolution: it was mobile (small size of the camera itself as well as its reprints), it was also immediate (the shortened time of picture producing compared to drawing, sketch or painting). The photography possessed also practically unlimited possibilities of multiplication as well as their low reproduction costs compared to traditional techniques. Therefore, since the invention of photography, the picture playing so far the role of language supplement started to constantly force it out, becoming a constitutive tool for comprehension, transfer or archiving the information. Since photography the picture is not only a supplement to a written work but it is becoming the autonomic medium itself. Introducing photography in high volume press enforced also the process of "shrinking of the world". Many years before McLuhan wrote about a computer as a generator of a process called Global Village, E. Lacan (writing about change in perceiving of reality) indicated photography to be one of the main factors to transition between local level to global level. According to Lacan basic function of photography is

both form and meaning of transmission (*vide* J.D. Bolter, R. Grusin *Remediation: Understanding of New Media*, Cambridge 1999, p. 19). Apart from this evident multi-meaning of used terms in definition of new media, the next obstacle is too big pressure, too big focus on material carriers of information at total exclusion of social and artistic aspects. We need to remember that neither television without auditorium nor newspapers without readers, nor internet without users would ever aspire to be mass media, they could also never be perceived as tools creating artistic space or systems of meanings. The mass communication means are not only technical possibilities or complicated IT structures closed in technological solutions, they catalyze (or in some cases they constitute) the new forms of artistic declarations, the systems of meanings, new semiotic codes, they also sculpture communicative landscape indirectly influencing the sphere of aesthetics, ethics, ideology, politics or religion. Any attempt of new media definition cannot miss few fundamental questions. Such terms as virtuality, immersion or multi-media are to be accurately defined and analyzed. The basic question is also setting a clear demarcation between term mass media and new media. The attempt to answer this question can be establishing clear demarcation to what distinguishes new media from old media, what is their essence and material, what are the forms and conventions commonly used in new media structures, what differentiates the new media language from traditional media language, and finally what are the individual characteristic features of new media aesthetics.

² M. McLuhan, *Wybór pism*, trans. E. Różalska, J.M. Stokłosa (Poznań 2001), p. 172.

“breaking the chain which ties you to your narrow household”.³ The appearance of photography can therefore be acknowledged as *signum temporis* of industrial revolution, as a Weber tool for disenchantment of the world,⁴ as technical possibility for reality archiving. Since the very beginning of photography everybody stressed its mechanical character (forestalling or even totally reducing the artistic aspect). When analyzing first theoretical concepts of photography it was easy to observe a certain binary analytical scheme between technology and art⁵, between representation and interpretation, between artists and manufacturers. The appearance of photography as a clear sign of industrial revolution places photography as a tool, the instrument for clear record of immediate socio-technical changes. Photography was therefore treated as a tool of new social order, as a form of immediate documentation of sudden changes. Perceiving photography as a threshold for our civilization, which initiates graphic revolution in culture and re-orientes basic aesthetic paradigms is represented by V. Flusser. Opposed to already classical aesthetical thought built around aesthetical consequence of invention of photography (R. Barth, S. Sontag, J. Baudrillard) Flusser constructs a new way of describing this medium. According to him the invention of photography can be treated as beginning of new media era because it commenced certain intimate relation between a man and a machine contributing to fundamental changes – since that moment we can talk about new form of forming new post-historical society characterized mainly by change in its way of thinking. Photography ousted processing model of thinking replacing it with formal model of thinking. It is related to the transition – from iconic character of our culture based on traditional pictures to a model founded on technical pictures. The camera is therefore the prototype of later machines producing technical pictures. Technical pictures possess totally different system of codes, meanings, symbols transforming themselves to human perception system. Traditional way of iconic communication was in a way a supplement, a comment to a text and in such context exhausting its capabilities. The pictures reproduced with technical aids substitute separate communication structures which can function totally independently in the context of meaning and symbol. Traditional thinking is characterized by linearity, by certain adoration of a text. With invention of photography the meaningful nature of written text had been ousted by new, visual model of reality shaping. Written text had lost its significance ousted by digitalization of picture, certain perceptive collage comprising human mind and technological abilities of machines. Several years before mass personal computer production Flusser formulated the thesis about the dominance of technological pictures which is the reason to numeric society creation, for which the computer calculation capacity is the final interpretation of reality. The formal concept based on numerical structure ousted traditional concept based mainly on mythical comprehension of a text supplemented with picture.

³ E. Lacan, *Esquisses photographiques* (Paris 1997), pp. 22–23.

⁴ Cf. M. Weber, *Polityka jako zawód i powołanie*, trans. A. Kopacki, P. Dybel (Kraków 1998), p. 122.

⁵ It is obvious, that world of visual arts was aided with technical world, enough to mention such inventions as *camera obscura*, *camera lucida*, magnifying glass, Renaissance *veduta*, *physionotrace*’a, but such inventions only aided artist’s works, not determined his act of creation.

The invention of photography in periodization of modern era is regarded a breakthrough moment, mainly in technical context. However such thesis needs to be supplemented by statement that the invention of photography is also a starting point in the world of artistic creation. The appearance of daguerreotype is for some art theoreticians the beginning of new media era, photography in a way opens totally different comprehension of visuality, *mimesis* paradigm, similarity, artistic *realis*. Indirectly – photography had assigned different meaning to other artistic arts. With the appearance of photography we can observe the end of certain multi-century tradition of technique mastering in these arts in which the *mimesis* paradigm played major part.

When analyzing the appearance of photography both in artistic world and as technical invention we can notice certain multi-levelness in its reception, evaluation or social assimilation. Although today the topologies excluding photography from arts are marginal at the time it appeared the discussion over whether photography is or is not a new form of art was a serious debate. The supporters of treating photography as fully righteous arts debated fiercely with technology oppositionists who wanted to define arts mostly on the basis of paradigm of originality, uniqueness of piece of art and artist's talent, which needed to correspond directly to artist's immaculate work abilities. Although in the scientific-technical circles the invention of photography (as optical-chemical invention) was received enthusiastically, the invention itself polarized drastically the artists' and art theoreticians' circles. The benefit to accepting photography into artistic world was the fact that photography fulfilled the long lasting artists' dream to perfectly reflect and picture the reality. At the end of XIX century the tradition rooted in theoretical assumptions of Italian Renaissance when Leonardo da Vinci situated painting at the highest post in the hierarchy of arts due to its close form to reflecting the object was still very strong. The major Renaissance dispute on definition of arts also pointed out certain necessary technical element in artistic capabilities, Renaissance artists no longer wanted to be treated equally to manufacturers, they leaned more to the new artistic model where talent needed to be reinforced with theoretical paradigm of knowledge of basic science and technique rules. It was the *sine qua non* condition to exercising arts (the rule assumed knowledge of optical geometry, aesthetic of color, perspective, chromaticity etc). Since the Renaissance the *imitation* paradigm was constantly being improved by each next generation of artists in operation with chromaticity, research on perspective, composition work of foreground and background. Since the times of Italian *Quattrocento* artistic eye judgment has elaborated tools for arranging visible world and the possibility for its true presentation. Such actions had one goal: as close approach to the presented object as possible. Should we assume such arguments as Arts constitutive conditions, the photography becomes the crown to multi-century visual-aesthetical tradition.

Theoreticians who enthusiastically received and qualified photography as Arts formulated various arguments defending their position. One of the main objections against daguerreotype was the dominance of technology over the act of creation. The supporters of photographic art claimed however that this act of technical

supremacy over act of creation is very welcome. The hand of an artist aiming to reflect reality was according to them too whimsical, too much dependant on physical condition of the artist, was too fragile tool connecting imagination to its clear presentation. According to supporters of photography as form of artistic creation, the sense of observation is very often influenced by interpretation pressure and will for subjective comment, which very often distances the presented object from its original. In traditional Arts artist very often, not only at the composition stage but also at chromaticity setting, perspective setting, brightness usage, selects the presented reality, positions, removes or exposes. The camera was free of such faults, not influenced by whims and subjective comments, truly imitating reality. According to the supporters of treating photography as Arts the invention of daguerreotype is holistic invention not subjective to pressure of artistic likes or dislikes. The apologists of this form of art pointed out that in such context photography is not only the presentation of an object but more its exact inventory. Therefore the objectivity of presentation in photography situates it in the context of traditional art copying nature at its very tip. The tip of a camera, its "heart" and its "eye", is named the objective for a reason. The photography therefore draws a new relation between the object and its picture, it creates not only the new aesthetic-semiotic dimension but also the new ontological reference relation. The photography apologists supporting photography as artistic act focused on multi-century admiration of mirror and its exact reflection. The only defect of a mirror was that the reflection was tightly attached to the present; mirror reflects but does not record. With the invention of photography the category of reflection itself became the past. Therefore, despite purely aesthetical motifs, the photography became in a way a new machine for observing and commenting history. The enthusiasts regarding photography in the context of art stressed its positive value to painting. The proof for that was the character of photography which could be utilized for archiving therefore releasing painting from its reporting and historical documenting functions.

Such enthusiasm on this new form of reality recording was common in the scientific circles, the new form was received as an invention perfectly documenting changes related to industrial revolution. The tone of discussion was however totally different when it came to analyzing photography in artistic context. Only marginal portion of art theoreticians regarded photography as new tool for artistic creation. The majority of art representatives treated photography as technical invention which would have disastrous impact on visual arts. They compared photography and painting, pointing out different character of each. The arts were correlated to *imitation* paradigm and the photography (raw, non-hierarchy, produced by soulless machine) was deprived of author's interpretation of the presented object, was not selected by artist's eye, and as a result lost the artistic value. The original reasons for rejecting photography as new form of art were resulted by its too innovative form of representation characterized by highly mimetic character. The final effect of "photography production" was too close to reality, choosing the theme of photography, frame, exposition, all became less important, they were not so strong element to allow act of photographing to be recognized as artistic

creation. At the beginning the obstacles on recognizing photography as art were also resulted by impossibility of separating the real world from a photographed world, there was too much concentration on exactness of pattern on the reprint, that's why there was no clear demarcation line elaborated between the reproduced element and reality. As the drawing was regarded as iconic the photography possessed only index record, it was a form of an imprint, trace, luminous technical sign. Until the end of XIX century the Arts were connected to the manufacturing know-how, were strongly tied to the artists' talent. In case of photography only pointing the camera objective to the object was recognized as act of creation. All remaining process was strictly technical, totally deprived of creative predicate, and the reprint itself was treated as a form of archiving the reality. For this reason photography was recognized as a form of reporting work, as the equivalent of the real world, as action deprived of subjectivism, individual character assigned to creation momentum, as documentary work deprived of expression, interpretation or creative act. And the photographers themselves were not recognized as artists but only as operators of "chemical-optical machine"; if in arts we can talk about artists then in photography we can only talk about the operator of photographic machine. In arts there are the creators, in photography there are copyists or documentary makers. The 'machine pictures', as photographs were called at their early stage of development, were only the surrogate of reality, its equivalent, the act of photographing was deprived of aesthetic value. Such view definitely separated two structures: artistic creativity and reporting work. The photography was treated as *ab-nihilo* work (creation out of nothing) and accused of artistic transience bordering nihilism, situating this invention only in the context of technical novelty totally deprived of aesthetic sphere. Skeptics such as Benjamin Walter, regarded the arrival of photography as the end of real art because they defined art in the context of uniqueness and unrepeatability. In such context the question raised by Benjamin Walter regarding the original reprint is as much rhetoric question as it is ironic. But despite the attempts of eliminating photography from the art context this invention changed certain visual tradition. The invention of photography allowed mechanical mass production of pictures unknown so far in history. The massiveness of the reproduced reprints significantly weakened one of the basic artistic paradigms: the originality and unrepeatability of the creation. The artistic privilege in visual arts based among others on the fact that artist was capable of (within his theoretical competence) bringing to life the alternative worlds, not so much producing (as constructor) but creating (*ex nihilo*, in godly manner). In case of photography, according to its critics, there is only passive recording involved, and this does not meet the creativity requirement. So according to critics of photography – in photography the artistic production has been ousted by reproduction. So the critics stated that photography is condemned to lack of picture autonomy, will always remain the copy, as R. Barthes pointed – something that happened. However strange it may seem today, many artists and critics at the end of XIX century considered the invention of photography ancillary to true art, something which can only function as the tool for art archiving by recording on the photography the painting, sculpture, architecture, and not as the act of

independent artistic creation. Critics were also pointing out the multi-century intimate relation between the artist's eye, his imagination and intellect. In case of photography this relation is forced out by the relation eye – optical mechanism. Machine ousts such tools as pencil, pen, chisel or paintbrush. Painter's studio is replaced with chemical laboratory. The Arts are regarded as presentation structures while the photography is regarded as certain time embalming mechanism. In the context of art we can talk about the catalyst of our imagination, in the context of photography we can talk only about certain technical context aiming for exact presentation of the photographed reality. This dispute on recognizing photography as art was often understood as mutually exclusive structures: art and science, artistry and technique, originality and reproduction represented at the end of XIX century by photography.

Photography as art was acknowledged quite late. Second decade of XX century appreciated both documentary character of photography as well as its expressive values. The vast popularity of photography and its use in so called graphic revolution contributed to this situation. It resulted in the evolution of critical view to recognition and approving photography as art. People recognized in photography the invention somehow demarcation, which possesses the medium with the unknown before means of presentation, own language and codes. They also noticed the permanent imprint of technical background in the context of artistic expression. As R. Barthes said "it is often said that the painters invented photography (conveying cropping, perspective, and *camera obscura* optics). But I say: no, the chemists did that".⁶

Never before the world of artistic creations approached the original so close, but at the same time assigned the different symbolic and semantic dimension to the photographed reality thus introducing the perceptive dualism on reality and its picturing. The iconic character of photography separates and selects only fragment of reality, static and unique, appraising at the same time the fragment chosen by the photographer, which in the final effect (reprint) gains totally different meaning, context, system of codes. Photography in a certain way replenished the empty space after painting started to experiment with form and composition (futurists, cubists, Dadaists) departing from mimetic paradigm in art. The artistic avant-garde of first decade of XX century with its program of anti-mimetic, resigning from any stigma of imitation ousted the object from the artistic interest. That is why today the invention of photography is regarded as direct imprint in the wider context of renaissance of reality in art. Certain common social anathema characterizing avant-garde art ousted this form of art in the context of critics, artistic bohemia and narrow group of professionals. The need for realism in art was appreciated in the invention of photography which replenishes the artistic grounds in that period. Along with the need for reality people anew appreciated in photography the admiration of material world, the care for exact reflection of reality or contemplation of the object, abandoned by the avant-garde painting. This new interest in reflection and recreation of reality had been fulfilled in photography.

⁶ R. Barthes, 'Światło obrazu', trans. J. Trznadel, *Arka*, 5 (1993), p. 97.

In photography people also discovered again the admiration of everyday reality. It was most significantly observed in the pop-art which by its program aimed to draw art near the common life, effacing demarcation created by multi-century tradition. That is why in pop-art we encounter the photographs of municipal sceneries, machinery, photographs of food products, domestic equipment, clothes, pop idols portraits. It is worth noticing that the photography of that period was not imitating painting, it created its new composition models, its codes, forms, artistic statement platforms. The mimetic power in photography had crushed the barrier impassable before for earlier artistic practices. Photography caused the spectacular return of object into the art circle. The meaning of photography to the whole culture (defined as visual) is fundamental. As M. Hopfinger notices "today photography not only presents but also means. Its fast semiotisation is the effect of its visual novelty, of how it managed to broaden our purview and what's visible".⁷ In 1861 C.K. Norwid wrote about this new invention: "Many already noticed that this invention, by merging the truthfulness of the whole and the perfection of details, must influence art. As I further assume; it may also influence memory".⁸

And it was exactly this analogy of photography to memory which influenced significantly the social reception of this new medium. When analyzing it as totally new artistic practices it is worth noticing that it is treated as depository of truth, medium possessing not only artistic inclination but also representative and truth revealing function in the manner not encountered before. The contemporary man's mind has been dominated by picture exactly thanks to photography. Photography in a certain way revealed the need for *mimesis* immanent to man. This natural need of *mimesis* is described by H. G. Gadamer as "joy of recognizing things by man".⁹ Describing the world with verbal tools does not possess such strong illusory and truthfulness paradigm as photograph which almost balances, freezing the real word in a frame; the word does not possess such abilities. In a certain way photography appropriated reality. Contemporary culture (for reason described as visual culture) is much more influenced by iconic character than by word; thus photography in a certain way became the representation of reality as a metaphor of truth. Z. Toczynski aptly states that: "painting not only approached reality in a greater extent than word, it managed to convince to itself as the carrier of truth. Painting as mimetic structure is in privileged situation. Therefore photography – as the picture – could refer not only to our experience, of people living in a certain place, culture and time but also to the picture as archetype – our internal experience, determined by the value of the picture".¹⁰

⁷ M. Hopfinger, *Hiperrealizm*, [in:] M. Hopfinger (red.), *Nowe Media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku. Antologia* (Warszawa 2005), p. 76.

⁸ C.K. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie* (Warszawa 1977), p. 442.

⁹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Rozum, słowo, dzieje*, trans. M. Łukasiewicz (Warszawa 1979), p. 135.

¹⁰ Z. Toczynski, *Fotografia*, [in:] *Nowe Media w komunikacji społecznej...*, p. 57.

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The Methodology of the Humanities and Karl R. Popper's Philosophy of Science and Art*

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to test the possibility of adopting Karl R. Popper's model of science in the humanities - its *raison d'être* is the current situation of the humanities. Difficult on account of their complex and elusive subject, this situation has recently become aggravated as a result of the poststructuralist rejection of the classical concept of scholarship in favour of either cognitive relativism or approaches openly admitting to an ideological bias. Popper's model of science might help protect the standards of research in the humanities, as it entails *inter alia* falsifiability as the criterion of demarcation for science, the correspondence theory of truth and, above all, the method of critical rationalism. An attempt to apply Popper's ideas to the humanities is further legitimized by his recognition that, although the object of their investigation is world 3, their method is the same as that of the natural sciences: identification of problems, tentative solutions and their critical examination. The most problematic issues in the project concern falsification, formulation of universal laws and predictions. Some of the difficulties (esp. with reference to falsification) might be overcome with the help of Popper's cognitive theory of art. Popper argued, namely, that art's primary function is cognitive (descriptive and problem-solving), that its nature is semiotic, that its origin is mythic and that the process of its creation involves an interaction between the mind of the artist and the object of world 3 the mind is engaged in creating.

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If my purpose were only to live pleasurably, why not use texts as though they were mescaline and why not decide that Beauty is Fun, Fun Beauty, that is all Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know?

Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*

I believe that the critical theory of knowledge [...] throws some light upon the great problems of all theories of knowledge: how it is that we know so much and so little; and how it is that we can lift ourselves slowly out of the swamp of ignorance – by our own bootstraps, as it were. We do so by working with guesses, and by improving upon our guesses, through criticism.

Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*

One must not suppose that the specificity of cognition available in the humanities might be so great as to either violate the rationality constraint on knowledge or limit the humanities to mere description.

Stanisław Kamiński, *Science and method*

Introduction: methodological problems of contemporary humanities

The present considerations take as their starting point the methodological problems of contemporary humanities. On one hand, the humanities today face, as always, the same difficulty of dealing with the complex matter of culture. On the other, they are challenged by the current revival of sceptical thought in philosophy,¹ the recent abortive efforts to organize the humanities along the model of the exact sciences and, according to some authors, the growing need to recognize the value of non-rational cognition in a world of advanced technology. All these phenomena have led to a breakdown of the trust once placed in science, conceived as rational cognition of objective truth about reality. As a result, a great deal of research conducted within the humanities (among others in literary studies) has been dominated by ideologies (for example, feminist or post-colonial) or else has advocated the relativity of all beliefs, contesting the need to apply any research methods and rejecting the principles of two-valued logic. It seems, however, that even though scientific cognition does not rest upon any ultimate foundation (there being no access to things in themselves or in absolute rules of reasoning), rational cognitive activity is highly valuable and, judging by the example of the exact sciences, may be effective in solving the real problems people face in their lives. The aim of this paper is to examine whether Karl R. Popper's theory of science, together with his theory of art, might be applied to the humanities, and whether this might give the humanities a sound methodological foundation and help demarcate for them the limits of scientificity. Defining such limits does not exclude the possibility of transgressing them – it does not deny the value of exploration conducted beyond them; all it does is signal that such exploration has a different, non-scientific character.

¹ One could mention here Nietzsche, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Freud, Wittgenstein and linguistic philosophy, Hegel, Heidegger and hermeneutics, Marxism, Feyerabend and Kuhn and recently Derrida, Rorty, Lyotard and Baudrillard.

1. Popper's views on the humanities

Defining the essence of science and defending its value, Popper does not differentiate between the exact sciences, which examine world 1 – the humanities, concerned with world 3, and the social sciences, whose proper object is world 2.² To be precise, he does differentiate between them, but only in so far as their proper object of enquiry is concerned, and not with reference to their method, value or essence. Popper then offers a homogenous vision of science. This vision, however, is not a new version of physicalism (universal science based on the language of mathematics as well as observation and experiments, conducted with a view to collecting data for inductive generalizations). In Popper's view, science consists of a critical approach to cognition and its results.

Although Popper did not develop his theory of science with reference to the humanities, confining himself by and large to the natural and social sciences, he made some remarks on the subject, which, by way of introduction, I will try to present here, before discussing the possibility of applying Popper's theory of science in the humanities.³

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE HUMANITIES

Popper protests against any attempts to antagonize the humanities and the natural sciences: "Labouring the difference between science and the humanities has long been a fashion, and has become a bore. The method of problem solving, the method of conjecture and refutation, is practised by both. It is practised in reconstructing a damaged text as well as in constructing a theory of radioactivity".⁴ What matters, therefore, is the common method of trial, error and error elimina-

² Popper does not formulate this idea *expressis verbis*, but it can be inferred from his theory of the three worlds on one hand and his analysis of the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences on the other. Although in the Preface to the first English edition, 1959, of *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* Popper states that "[a]ll science is cosmology", he does not repeat this idea in his later works, K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London 1992), p. 15.

³ A few comments on the subject may be found in the following books by K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London 1969), p. 27 (on the specific quality of historical research which focuses on "the sources of information" rather than "the facts themselves"); *The Myth of the Framework: In Defence of Science and Rationality* (London 1997), pp. 137–153 (on the common methodology of history and the natural sciences), as well as in *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford 1979), pp. 146–150, 162–168, 180–190 (on the subject of the humanities in the context of the Popperian interpretation of the relationship between man and products of the human mind as well as on the problem of understanding and interpretation in the humanities). Among the disciplines traditionally classified among the humanities, Popper devoted the most attention to history, which, however, he regarded as a social science (*Objective Knowledge...*, p. 290).

⁴ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 185. The methodologies of the natural sciences and the humanities are also similar as, in both, for any observation a problem is the point of reference, and any observation needs to be interpreted, "A historical document, like a scientific observation, is a document only relative to a historical problem. And like an observation, it has to be interpreted" (*ibidem*, p. 145). Popper states also that "[i]n both [history and the natural sciences] we start from myths – from traditional prejudices, beset with error – and from these we proceed by criticism: by the critical examination of errors. In both the role of evidence is, in the main, to correct our mistakes, our prejudices, our tentative theories – that is, to play a part in the critical discussion, in the elimination of error" (K.R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework...*, p. 140, also pp. 138–153).

tion. At the same time Popper admits that hypotheses in the humanities tend to be less strict than those in natural sciences.⁵ He admits also that the possibility of observation, conducting experiments and taking measurements, helps eliminate some theories in natural science more quickly, facilitating their critical assessment. Yet these features are not constitutive of scientific cognition.⁶

THE OBJECT OF ENQUIRY

The basic task of the humanities is to examine world 3 (products of the human mind) in the context of world 3 (other objects belonging to world 3), rather than in the context of world 2 (the human mind): “it is the understanding of objects belonging to world 3 which constitutes the chief task of the humanities. This, it appears, is a radical departure from the fundamental dogma accepted by almost all students of the humanities [...]. I mean the dogma that the objects of our understanding belong to world 2 as the products of human actions and that, consequently, they are mainly to be understood and explained in psychological (including social psychological) terms”.⁷

THE ACT OF COMPREHENSION

“The activity of understanding” (in the humanities) does not really differ, for Popper, from “that of all problem solving”.⁸ Understanding is not limited to the area of the humanities, whatever Wilhelm Dilthey or Robin Collingwood might think.⁹ On the contrary, it may well be found, more or less in the same form, in natural science:

“1. As we understand other people owing to our shared humanity, we may understand nature because we are part of it.

⁵ Popper believes that cases of rigorous standards of conjecture testing (a case in point might be a historical reconstruction of a document) are rare in the humanities. On the other hand, sometimes in natural science such strict standards cannot be maintained either, as in the case of some cosmological hypotheses, which are not sufficiently precise to allow refutation (K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge*, pp. 185–186, note 36). It is worth noting in this context that for Popper, precision should be appropriate to the subject of investigation, greater precision need not always mean a better theory.

⁶ According to Popper, a theory may also be eliminated on the basis of its inner incoherence or lack of compatibility between this theory and some other theories (K.R. Popper, *The Myth Of the Framework...*, p. 162). From the above line of reasoning it may seem to follow that observation is impossible in the social sciences (for it is the social and natural sciences that Popper compares in the passage in question), but this might well be an omission on his part.

⁷ K.R. Popper, *In Search of a Better World. Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years*, transl. L.J. Bennett (London 1992), p. 165. Objects of world 3, according to Popper, if they are once called into being, exert considerable and not wholly predictable influence both on the world of the human mind and through its mediation on the material world, which is why they deserve this kind of autonomous treatment: “All our actions in world 1 are influenced by our world 2 grasp of world 3. This is why it is impossible to understand the human mind and the human self without understanding world 3. And it is also why it is impossible to interpret either world 3 as a mere expression of world 2, or world 2 as the mere reflection of world 3” (K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem. In Defence of Interaction* (London 1994), p. 142).

⁸ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 166.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 183.

2. As we understand men in virtue of some rationality of their thoughts and actions, so we may understand the laws of nature because of some kind of rationality or understandable necessity inherent in them. [...]
3. [...] another sense [of understanding] shared [by the natural sciences] with the humanities – [consists in] the attempt to understand the world of nature in the way we understand a work of art: as a creation.
4. [...] there is in the natural sciences that consciousness of an ultimate failure of all our attempts to understand which has been much discussed by students of the humanities and which has been attributed to the ‘otherness’ of other people, the impossibility of any real self-understanding, and the inevitability of over-simplification which is inherent in any attempt to understand anything unique and real”.¹⁰

Paraphrasing Popper, one might say that there are far-reaching analogies in the human endeavour to understand culture and nature – we understand in either case that of which we are a part, that which is rational and which appears to us as created, but the quality of our comprehension is never satisfactory.

2. Application of Popper’s theory of science in the humanities

Popper did not provide a systematic treatment of the methodology of the humanities. The discussion that follows is an attempt to do so. First, to make Popper’s theory of science easier to operate, I summarize its most important theses.¹¹

1. The aim of science is truth (science aims to describe and explain reality).¹²
2. Falsifiability is the criterion of scientificity: a thesis (theory) is scientific if it (or predictions based on it) may be confronted with empirical data. A thesis (theory) which is not contradictory with any conceivable state of affairs is either non-scientific or worthless because of its generality.
3. The method of science consists in critical rationalism.¹³ Any scientific investigation starts with a problem. The problem is solved by putting forward bold hypotheses¹⁴ and, subsequently, by their critical examination. In terms of their

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

¹¹ The presentation is based on *The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Conjectures and Refutations...*, *Objective Knowledge...*, *The Myth of the Framework...*, *In Search of a Better World...*. It is meant to be synthetic and thus does not take into account the evolution of Popper’s ideas. For the purpose of this essay, this inaccuracy seems negligible.

¹² Popper accepts the correspondence theory of truth, which involves the correspondence between a theory and facts, in the version offered by Tarski.

¹³ It is worth noting here that for Popper, rationality consists of “a critical attitude towards problems – the readiness to learn from our mistakes, and the attitude of consciously searching for our mistakes and for our prejudices”, (K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, p. 134; cf. also *Preface to The Logic of Scientific Discovery...*, p. 16).

¹⁴ What is precious in theories is high testability, efficiency in problem solving and the ability to pass severe tests. Popper notes also that a theory that is rich in empirical content may be useful even after it has been refuted, as it often gives rise to new problems (K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 144). Cautious and general hypotheses, on the other hand, though they may be hard to falsify, make little contribution to science.

content, the hypotheses are universal laws aiming to describe the structure of the world. Regarding the stage at which hypotheses are formulated, there are no methodological procedures of absolute validity; apart from reason and experience, also irrational sources of cognition (such as intuition or imagination) are permissible. At the stage of falsification, the basic operation is deduction: deriving from theories (general statements) conclusions (in the form of singular statements), by means of which the theory may be subject to criticism (the falsehood of a singular statement, compatible with the theory, discloses, by way of inference, the falsehood of the theory).¹⁵ Popper rejects all authorities; the authority of reason, experience and also language.¹⁶

4. Knowledge in science is hypothetical. Not only tentative formulations of scientific laws, but also observational statements and the assessment of theories or, to be precise, reports from critical discussions about them, always enjoy the status of hypothesis.¹⁷ A foolproof scientific method that would yield certain knowledge is unavailable. There is no criterion of truth that would help identify true theories.

5. In spite of the fact that we remain confined to the sphere of hypothetical interpretations and we have no access to pure empirical data or conclusively verified, hence definitely true, theses, science makes progress. This is possible thanks to the criteria which define the relative value of a hypothesis: simplicity,¹⁸ prognostic value,¹⁹ and the ability to survive severe tests. Owing to such criteria,

¹⁵ Testing makes use of some basic rules: respect for empirical data, recognition of the rules of the two-valued logic (including the law of excluded middle), and strong arguments built along the rules of logic on the basis of empirical data. Popper justifies the choice of the classical logic indicating its strength in comparison with alternative systems of logic. If tests are to be severe, one should not choose a logic which may tolerate contradictions. In mathematics, theorems may be proved with the use of a weaker logic, but in empirical science, where logic is used to refute false hypotheses, the two-valued logic should be applied (*ibidem*, pp. 304–308).

¹⁶ Objectivity of science consists in rational criticism (which is universal in its scope) and the objectivity of the logical rule of contradiction which science adopts, not in “an impartial state of mind in the scientists” (K.R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework...*, pp. 69–70; *In Search of a Better World...*, p. 67). Some more specific methodological rules also regulate scientific investigation, for example the rule forbidding introducing *ad hoc* hypotheses in the process of falsification if their purpose were merely to defend the theory that might otherwise be refuted. On the contrary, auxiliary hypotheses may be introduced to the tested theory only if they increase its falsifiability (K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery...*, pp. 82–83).

¹⁷ There are two exceptions, i.e. two kinds of statements whose truth is indisputable: tautological statements and some mathematical propositions.

¹⁸ This simplicity is, according to Popper, “intimately connected with the idea that our theories should describe the structural properties of the world...” (K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, p. 241). Popper also writes that “our theories make assertions about structural or relational properties of the world; and [...] the properties described by an explanatory theory must be, in some sense or other, deeper than those to be explained”, (K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 197). Although the concept of depth cannot be subject to logical analysis, it may serve as an intuitive guideline. This is how Popper defines his attitude to essentialism in science, calling his own approach a “‘modified essentialism’ – with emphasis upon the word ‘modified’”, (*ibidem*, p. 195), since he rejects both ultimate explanations and enquiries into the essence of things (*ibidem*, pp. 191–205, esp. pp. 194–196).

¹⁹ The new theory “must have new and testable consequences (preferably consequences of a new kind); it must lead to the prediction of phenomena which have not so far been observed”, (K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, p. 241). It is worth noting, however, that Popper understands predictions as part of the procedure of falsification (if the theory gives rise to new

competitive theories may be compared, and worse theories may be replaced with better ones.

6. Reality is the object of scientific enquiry. It is inadvisable to attach too much importance on linguistic analysis.²⁰ Scientific language should be simple.

Putting aside the question whether this model of science (or its elements) has ever been employed by humanists, I would like to consider the difficulties which, theoretically, such a project might involve. The most problematic seem to be the procedure of falsification, formulation of universal laws, and predictions. This is so because of the specific object which the humanities investigate, which is immaterial, unique and sometimes apparently marked by contradictions.

Approaching the question of falsification, one should bear in mind that even in the exact sciences this procedure is fraught with difficulties and many objections have been raised, in particular with reference to the possibility of isolating the thesis to be tested and confronting a theory with facts, which themselves are theory-laden.²¹

To the objection that it may be difficult to isolate the faulty element out of a theory, Popper responds that testing a theory means comparing it with other theories and choosing the better theory – the one that better corresponds with the facts, not the true one: “Against the view here developed one might be tempted to object (following Duhem) that in every test it is not only the theory under investigation which is involved, but also the whole system of our theories and assumptions – in fact, more or less the whole of our knowledge – so that we can never be certain which of all these assumptions is refuted. But this criticism overlooks the fact that if we take each of the two theories (between which the crucial experiment is to decide) *together* with all this background knowledge, as indeed we must, then we decide between two systems which differ *only* over the two theories which are at stake”.²²

Popper is also aware of the fact that any observation statement is implicated in a theory: “The ‘empirical basis’ consists largely of a mixture of *theories* of lower degree of universality (of ‘reproducible effects’). But the fact remains that, relative to whatever basis the investigator may accept (at his peril), he can test his theory only by trying to refute it”.²³ The so-called facts are not pure empirical data but interpretations thereof. Basic statements are to some extent dogmas — it is the scientist who decides whether he/she will temporarily accept or reject them; at the same time all such statements are open to the procedure of falsification and must always meet the condition of observability (i.e. basic statements “must be testable, inter-subjectively, by ‘observation’”²⁴).

predictions, this means it may be tested independently); elsewhere he refers to the same postulate as if it were simply an element of crucial tests to which a theory should be exposed (p. 247).

²⁰ It is likewise inadvisable to attach too much importance to definitions (which do not extend knowledge) and to maximal precision (the optimal precision is relative to a given issue).

²¹ For a detailed presentation of these and other objections to Popper’s thought, see A. Chmielewski, *Filozofia Poppera: analiza krytyczna* (Wrocław 1995).

²² K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, p. 112.

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 41–42, note 8.

²⁴ K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery...*, p. 102 (cf. pp. 100–111 about basic statements).

Popper admits that there is no certain base upon which the procedure of falsification could rest.²⁵ Any criticism, as he explains in *The Open Society...*, is implicated in various assumptions. None of these have been verified but all may be subjected to the test of falsification. Finally, Popper points out that the main purpose of criticism is to demonstrate that if a theory fails to solve the problem whose solution was its aim, which is often feasible within the assumptions of a given theory,²⁶ a theory may be falsified by being confronted with predictions which can be derived from the theory in question, or else when it is shown to fail to explain certain phenomena which remain within its scope. In other words, a theory may be refuted on the basis of immanent criticism.

Even if falsification is problematic, Popper argues that it is the best option available; with greater or lesser success scientists have been taking advantage of this procedure (the progress of science shows that their decision has been right), as illustrated by convincing examples of effective falsification (the one quoted most frequently is the refutation of Newton's theory). The above discussion of the issue has been extensive because falsification, regardless of the nature of the object under investigation, is not a methodological procedure easy to operate/prove, which Popper admitted. It is however, unlike induction, a procedure that in logical terms is both legitimate and conclusive.

Falsification is not only a scientific method but also a demarcation criterion that lets us distinguish between scientific (empirical) and non-scientific (non-empirical) statements. The humanities have for their object of investigation the world 3 (i.e. the world of objects called into being by the human mind), which seem to be part of empirical reality.²⁷ This world however, according to Popper, is immaterial,²⁸ it consists of ideas. The proper work of art, *Hamlet* for example, exists in world 3; it is neither a copy of the book nor a theatrical performance (both of which are material objects belonging to world 1), nor the content of its author's mind (psychic experience belonging to world 2), but an idea.²⁹ But 'immaterial' does not mean here less real or subjective. Popper's theory of the three worlds gives objects of world 3 a fully objective and autonomous existence in world 3, as well as a secondary existence in material form in world 1 and in psychic form in the mind of the artist and the recipient of art in world 2.³⁰ We come to know ideas because world 3 and world 1 exert influence on each other through the mediation of world 2. Yet the primary object of the Popperian humanities is neither the material

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 108–111 ; *Objective Knowledge...*, pp. 33–35.

²⁶ K.R. Popper, *Facts, Standards, and Truth. A Further Criticism of Relativism*, [in:] K.R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London 1963), pp. 369–396.

²⁷ In the case of philology, the object of investigation is language and literature, in the case of the history of art this is the works of art, in the case of the history of ideas this is the history of human thought. The humanistic disciplines are now much more numerous (including also anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies and the like); for the sake of simplicity I choose here the classical ones.

²⁸ I am not sure whether this is also true about the subject of history, which Popper anyway places among the social sciences.

²⁹ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 21–22

³⁰ It seems that Popper allows for the situation in which some objects of world 3 might come into being entirely within world 2, without any interaction with world 3 (*ibidem*). For them, the psychic form of existence might be primary.

dimension of a work of art nor the subjective experience the work inspires, but ideas, which exist autonomously.

For the sake of the present discussion of falsification, let us assume that the statements made in the humanities concern analysis (description), interpretation and evaluation. With reference to analysis and observational statements, the procedure of falsification does not give rise to any special problems: if, for example, someone claims that in Conrad's novel *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* the author employs exclusively the third-person singular narration, it suffices to take the book in one's hands to refute the statement by indicating a passage with the first-person plural narration. A sentence of that kind in terms of Popper's theory would be an observational (empirical) statement, whereas falsification should be applied first of all to bold hypothetical statements of universal laws,³¹ which is the second problematic issue as the hypotheses put forward in the humanities, even when bold, rarely take the form of statements that are unconditionally, universally valid. Patricia Waugh, for instance, in her book on metafiction in English literature presents the hypothesis that metafiction as a narrative strategy was very much foregrounded in English fiction written between 1964 and 1984 (and, moreover, to some extent is typical of the whole genre of the novel)³². In other words, Waugh does not claim that in every English novel published between 1964 and 1984 metafiction will feature prominently – she suggests that this will be the case in most of them.

While formulating laws in the humanities, one should take into account the unique character of objects of world 3. Especially with reference to works of art, some regularities (rather than laws) may be identified only when examining a larger set of objects. This is quite different from the investigation of inanimate matter (where two atoms of hydrogen are practically identical), different also from the investigation of animate nature (where each slowworm from the species *Anguis fragilis* will basically repeat the same matrix coded in genes, in statistical terms only slightly modified by personal experience, mutation and recombination; which does not mean, however, that the lizard's behaviour will be determined in the same degree as its morphology). A different level of precision is proper for the laws that concern inanimate nature (*cf.* the atom of hydrogen), living beings (*cf.* the slowworm), man-made objects (*cf.* *Hamlet*) and man him/herself. Apparently one should accept the fact that culture is more original than nature, and that the demand that universal laws should be formulated in the humanities along the model of some of the natural sciences,³³ is unreasonable.³⁴ Incidentally, the alleged

³¹ The falsification of such a general thesis (theory) may of course involve testing singular statements that logically follow from the general theory.

³² P. Waugh, *Metafiction. The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London 1985), p. 5. Waugh defines metafiction as fiction which deliberately and systematically undermines the illusion that the world presented is the real world, if the purpose of this strategy is to problematize the relation between reality and fiction (*ibidem*, p. 2).

³³ The laws concern structural properties of the world, hence it is worth noting that, for example, in linguistics, literary studies or anthropology in the 20th century, one could witness the development of structuralism, i.e. searching for certain recurring, although not necessarily universal, patterns of relations.

³⁴ There may be some exceptions, but these will be very general statements, e.g. in any natural language there are some syntactic rules.

universality of natural laws, in Popper's opinion, might actually be limited to our part of the universe,³⁵ so that the asymmetry might not be quite as striking after all.

More importantly, the absence of universal laws does not necessarily prevent the application of falsification. If a hypothesis speaks of a certain regularity (tendency) which is not about a universal rule, this hypothesis may be falsified by examining the proportion of the elements which comply with the hypothesis in the total set. A single case that contradicts the hypothesis does not suffice in such a case to refute the hypothesis; auxiliary methodological rules are necessary to establish the limits of tolerance for exceptions. There is also the problem of the representativeness of the objects selected for investigation. Clearly, these should be sufficiently numerous and selected at random – here again specific rules are needed to preclude the possibility of data manipulation. Under some conditions, although not as spectacularly conclusive as in the case of the exact sciences, the procedure of falsification seems nonetheless available to the humanities.³⁶

Most problematic however, is not description, but interpretation, i.e. the understanding of world 3. Are interpretations falsifiable? Discussing the hypothetical case of Jack the Ripper, who is supposed to have found inspiration for his crimes in the Gospel according to Saint Luke, Umberto Eco demonstrates that some readings are patently unacceptable, thus falsifying the hypothesis about the total freedom of interpretations.³⁷ Eco offers also an example illustrating the application

³⁵ E.g. K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 204; *The Logic of Scientific Discovery...*, pp. 429–430.

³⁶ Also in the natural sciences (physics included) there are some areas where the only possible description of phenomena is by estimates of probabilities. To falsify a probabilistic description or to transform a metaphysical statement into an empirical one, auxiliary rules are needed (K.R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery...*, pp. 261–262, 189–205). As Popper observes, logical falsification can be applied to universal statements, not to statements which speak of probabilities (“because they can never be logically contradicted by any basic statements”; *ibidem*, p. 261).

³⁷ U. Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation. World, History, Texts* (Cambridge 1992), pp. 24–25: “Some contemporary theories of criticism assert that the only reliable reading of a text is a misreading, that the only existence of a text is given by the chain of responses it elicits, and that, as maliciously suggested by Tzvetan Todorov [...], a text is only a picnic where the author brings the words and the reader brings the sense. Even if that were true, the words brought by the author are a rather embarrassing bunch of material evidences that the reader cannot pass over in silence, or in noise. [...] To interpret a text means to explain why these words can do various things (and not others) through the way they are interpreted. But if Jack the Ripper told us that he did what he did on the grounds of his interpretation of the Gospel according to Saint Luke, I suspect that many reader-oriented critics would be inclined to think that he read Saint Luke in a pretty preposterous way. Non-reader-oriented critics would say that Jack the Ripper was deadly mad – and I confess that [...] much to my regret I would agree that Jack the Ripper needed medical care. I understand that my example is rather farfetched and that even the most radical deconstructionist would agree (I hope, but who knows?) with me. Nevertheless I think that even such a paradoxical argument must be taken seriously. It proves that there is at least one case in which it is possible to say that a given interpretation is a bad one. In terms of Karl Popper's theory of scientific research, this is enough to disprove the hypothesis that interpretation has no public criteria (at least statistically speaking)”. Eco argues further that “we can accept a sort of Popper-like principle according to which if there are no rules that help to ascertain which interpretations are the ‘best’ ones, there is at least a rule for ascertaining which ones are ‘bad’” (*ibidem*, p. 52).

of falsification with reference to a particular interpretation: an alchemical interpretation of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Here, characters are supposed to represent various chemical substances (Little Red Riding Hood, for example, is cinnabar, a mercury sulphide, red in colour), whereas the inside of the Wolf stands for the alchemical oven. Devoured by the Wolf (calomel, i.e. mercurous chloride), Little Red Riding Hood, in the process of a chemical reaction, becomes pure mercury. This results in a clash at the end of the fairy-tale, when the girl is still wearing her red hood (which should have become silver).³⁸ Demonstrating this contradiction, which disqualifies the alchemical interpretation, may be taken as a successful falsification.

In the above interpretation, Eco assumes the rule of the text's coherence, which goes back to Augustine, and has been widely accepted until the middle of the 20th century. This is how Eco paraphrases it: "any interpretation given of a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed by, and must be rejected if it is challenged by, another portion of the same text".³⁹ In the mid-1960s, deconstructionism (Jacques Derrida) introduced a competitive rule of interpretation: the deliberate search for whatever does not fit, disrupts the text, or gives rise to its internal contradictoriness.

To accept contradiction either as an element of a theory⁴⁰ or reality is, for Popper, a mistake. It is indeed the mistake that hinders the development of knowledge and precludes rationality.⁴¹ Contradiction, whether internal to the theory or located between the theory and facts, is the "criterion of error", an important signal in the process of falsification, hence its significance.⁴² This is so because reality, Popper argues, is not self-contradictory; at most its structures may display certain polarity, an example of which being positive and negative electricity charges. For a real contradiction we would need a body at one and the same time charged both positively and negatively: "But we need not say that such contradictory facts do not exist".⁴³ From the above example one might deduce that Popper, writing about facts and reality, has in his mind *de facto* world 1 – the world of matter. In world 3, art included,⁴⁴ or in world 2 for that

³⁸ U. Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge 2004), pp. 91–92.

³⁹ U. Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation...*, p. 65.

⁴⁰ Popper offers two proofs for the possibility of inferring any conclusion whatsoever from the theory which is self-contradictory (K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, pp. 317–322).

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 312–335. Also Ernest Gellner, remaining under Popper's influence, believes that in terms of cognition it is unification (searching for connections) that is precious; concentrating on differences is quite contrary to the essence of the scientific endeavour (E. Gellner, *Words and Things. A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and Study in Ideology* (London 1959), pp. 199–200).

⁴² K.R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework...*, p. 143.

⁴³ K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, p. 329.

⁴⁴ Cf. the following passage from the novel *Watt* by Beckett: "For except, one, not to need, and, two, a witness to his not needing, Knott needed nothing, as far as Watt could see" (S. Beckett, *Watt* (New York 1970), p. 202). Critics agree that Knott represents in the novel the man-made image of God. Hence Knott's lack of any needs, related to the fact that Knott is the Absolute, clashes (remains in a logical relation of contradiction) with Knott's need to be free of any needs as well as with Knott's need to have a witness of his being free of any needs. Another example might be the difference of opinion between Faustus and Mephostophilis as

matter,⁴⁵ it is not so easy to exclude the possibility of contradiction. One might say that on the level of scholarly reflection on art (i.e. in the humanities) contradiction should not be tolerated (since scholarly discourse is bound by the rules of the classical logic, contradiction indicates falsehood), but on the level of the object of that reflection (i.e. in art), contradiction may sometimes be present.

If this is so, then Popper's views on contradiction apply to Derrida's deconstruction in so far as deconstruction deliberately ignores the rule of contradiction in scholarly research, but not when it struggles to expose contradictions inherent in art. With reference to art and the search for contradictions present therein, one may at most charge deconstructionists with one-sidedness. As most works of art seem to remain in the state of tension between coherence and contradiction, conflict and its resolution, a comprehensive interpretation of a work of art should give justice to this dichotomy. Unfortunately, this means that it will not always be obvious which interpretation is legitimate and which is not, on account of the contradiction that a work of art may display. A glaring contradiction, not within the work of art, but within its interpretation or between the interpretation and the work of art, seems, however, to disqualify definitely the interpretative hypothesis. In other cases one could perhaps take advantage of Popper's idea of comparing competitive hypotheses: the interpretation with greater explanatory power is preferable. One might also bear in mind that in the light of Popper's theory, all knowledge has a hypothetical status. Scholars need not necessarily resolve which is the one correct interpretation, they can construct ever better interpretations or choose them from a number of various competitive (as well as complementary) ones⁴⁶.

Summing up, contact between theory and reality sufficient to identify an errant theory might be accepted as a criterion of scientificity in the humanities. Yet

regards the existence of hell in the fifth scene of Marlowe's drama ("I think hell's a fable", claims the former; "But I am an instance to prove the contrary", responds the latter; C. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, [in:] F. Kermode, J. Hollander (eds.), *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 1 (New York 1973), pp. 848-899, esp. p. 862). The sonnet by Wyatt provides yet another illustration; this is the poem's depiction of the experience of love: "I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise", (T. Wyatt, *I Find No Peace*, [in:] F. Kermode, J. Hollander (eds.), *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 1, p. 617). These are of course relatively trivial examples of contradictions, whose aim is only to explain the challenge that humanistic interpretation needs to face.

⁴⁵ Contradiction in art might actually be seen as a derivative of contradictions that can be found in the human psyche, especially on the assumption that art is occupied with the exploration of the world of psyche (*cf.* the discussion of Popper's theory of art, below).

⁴⁶ It is at this point that the question of the criteria by means of which interpretations should be evaluated becomes relevant. The criteria which let us assess the value of hypotheses offered by Popper (simplicity, prognostic potential, ability to withstand severe tests, or, partly related to them, the explanatory power of hypotheses, i.e. the depth and scope of explanation, as well as their efficiency in problem solving) seem to need certain adjustment. The possibility of formulating predictions, for example, seems questionable in the humanities. To assess the efficiency of an interpretation, one should previously define the problem in the humanities, which in turn may depend on the definition of the problem in art. Both issues will be touched upon in the forthcoming sections of the paper devoted to the Popperian theory of art. Right now, I merely wanted to note that the acceptance of the Popperian model of science in the humanities would need to be complemented by specific rules regulating the evaluation of interpretations.

the application of falsification will be limited by the originality of works of art and their inner contradictions. For the time being I leave aside the question of the falsification of evaluative statements; I will resume it with reference to the humanistic disciplines investigating art, when discussing Popper's theory of art.

There still remains the issue of predictions. Popper believes that progress in science hangs upon the possibility of making predictions (it is, to be precise, one of the three conditions of scientific progress). However, he practically excludes this possibility in the social sciences, without questioning their scientific status. In Popper's opinion, predictions as exact as those made in the natural sciences are not available in the social sciences for two reasons. First of all, in the natural sciences, predictions are conditional (i.e. the scientist predicts what will happen under certain conditions⁴⁷); only on the basis of conditional predictions is it sometimes possible to put forward an unconditional prediction. In the social sciences, however, such conditions are beyond our control. Secondly, predictions are possible in systems which are recurrent, isolated and stationary. Society is not such a system.⁴⁸ The humanities are concerned with a similar, open, system, where the scholar has no control over the factors which determine the situation, but also here the inability to make predictions needs not imply a lack of scientificity.

Furthermore, even in some areas of the natural sciences, it is not always possible to formulate predictions – for example when investigating the behaviour of animals (this impossibility also results from irregularity in the behaviour of the objects under examination). Also within a science as exact as quantum mechanics, predicting phenomena might turn out to be impossible, e.g. predicting the movement of a single electron. However, it is still possible, as argued by Armin Teske, to explain in retrospect the causes of its movement and course⁴⁹. Perhaps the humanities have to be satisfied with this kind of retrospective explanation of the evolution of culture.⁵⁰

The level of indeterminism, if one may say so, seems to be lowest in the area of the phenomena of inanimate nature, it grows higher with the appearance of life, and reaches the top level in the area of human activity. The lower the level of indeterminism, the easier it is to make predictions. Still, for Popper – an

⁴⁷ As an example, Popper gives the prediction that if temperature rises, water will begin to boil.

⁴⁸ K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, pp. 339–340.

⁴⁹ A. Teske, *On the Humanisation of the Natural Sciences*, transl. E. Horoszkiewicz, [in:] A. Teske, *The History of Physics and the Philosophy of Science. Selected Essays* (Wrocław 1972), pp. 119–127, esp. pp. 121–123.

⁵⁰ There are humanists who would disagree with this approach, i.e. who believe that predictions are possible in the humanities: "In contradistinction to some experts who declare literary studies [...] to be criticism, art, or a sum of knowledge, we hold the opinion that it may be and sometimes becomes a *scholarly activity* in its own right. This means that a student operating within the discipline can *determine the object* of his/her scholarly interest, and that he/she can *present an explanatory description* of both the observation and the observed object's *functions* [...]. It also means he/she can reach some *verifiable conclusions* about this object, and – in a literary historical perspective – *foresee* the appearance of some phenomena in unknown or yet unobserved material" (A. Zgorzelski, *Against Methodological Compromise in Literary Studies*, [in:] L.S. Kolek (ed.), *Approaches to Fiction* (Lublin 1996), pp. 231–242, esp. p. 233; emphasis in the original).

indeterminist and a proponent of the view of the emergent character of life⁵¹ – any predictions are always burdened by the risk of error.⁵²

The postulate of predictions may also be interpreted not as foreseeing the future, but as anticipating the result of conducted research, including the investigation of the past (for example, regarding the fossil findings anticipated by the theory of evolution). In this sense predictions may also be put forward in the humanities: one can, for instance, reconstruct the lost Violin Concerto in G minor by Bach, the original version of the Harpsichord Concerto in F minor (BWV 1056): one day we might be able to compare this reconstruction with the original, although the chances that it will be found seem low.

Leaving aside the reservations concerning the possibility of formulating universal laws, falsifying theories and putting forward predictions in the humanities, one can state in conclusion that Popper's model of science – the search for truth interpreted in terms of correspondence between theory and the facts,⁵³ critical rationalism as the general methodological principle,⁵⁴ the hypothetical status of knowledge⁵⁵ and the postulate that language should be treated exclusively as a tool

⁵¹ K.R. Popper, *In Search of a Better World...*, pp. 18–22.

⁵² Nature, up to a certain level of complexity, is in its behaviour to some extent determined by the laws of physical matter. Culture, created by man, evolves according to changeable and unpredictable laws which are also created by man (in interaction with all the remaining reality). This is why we can understand the past development of culture but are unable to predict its future course. In so far as man is part of nature, he/she is determined by its laws, but by virtue of his/her free will and self-consciousness, he/she may, or so we can presume, escape its jurisdiction. Incidentally, the Popperian interpretation of evolution ascribes more importance to the changeability of organisms than to the changeability of the environment in the whole world of animate nature (K.R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework...*, pp. 3–5).

⁵³ The postulate of truth being the ultimate aim of science may be adopted in the humanities. This is a matter of choice which is, to be sure, entangled in various metaphysical assumptions (concerning the existence of truth, its value and accessibility), yet their rejection (be it in the name of radical scepticism or pragmatism) *de facto* equals resignation from science, if not from any cognitive endeavour whatsoever. There seems to be no difference in this respect between the natural sciences and the humanities.

⁵⁴ The scientific method, i.e. critical rationalism, a problem as the starting point, its tentative solution and critical examination of this solution (the trial-and-error method) may be used by the humanists. The similarity of Welsh and Irish or the prominent presence of the narrative in contemporary British fiction may exemplify problems to be solved. The task of the humanists is to find explanations of these phenomena; the conclusions they reach might subsequently become the subject of critical discussion, respecting the rules of logic, aiming to assess the correspondence of the hypothetical explanations with empirical reality (world 3). The Popperian rejection of dogmatism and the demand that objectivism should be based on the method rather than the virtue of scholars (*cf.* note 16) may also be respected.

⁵⁵ Ascribing hypothetical status to knowledge, declining from qualifying any theses as ultimately true can doubtless be done in the humanities, as this means greater moderation with regard to the aspirations of the disciplines in question, rather than their expansion. With regard to detailed knowledge, our cognition has been gaining ever greater precision: we know, for example, the chemical composition of water, the value of earthly gravitation, the literary techniques of 'stream of consciousness' and the convention of the Chinese-box structure. The situation is more problematic regarding general theories: we do not know the causes that led to the rise of the universe, we do not understand the connection between the material body and psychic experience, we cannot define 'aesthetic value', the *raison d'être* of art or the limits of interpretation of works of art. On this general level, it is clear enough that we operate in the sphere of various, often competitive, hypotheses, whose value we are continuously testing. Our understanding of

(with the obvious exclusion of the disciplines which investigate language, i.e. linguistics and literary studies) – does not pose serious problems and may be accepted in the humanities, as in fact (perhaps with the exception of the hypothetical status of knowledge) it has been accepted, at least in the form of intuitively respected postulates in the past, from the birth of these disciplines until the middle of the 20th century, and by some scholars, also afterwards.

Regarding the reservations mentioned above, “predicting” the future in the humanities seems impossible or possible within very strict limits and burdened with a high risk of error, but then the possibility of making predictions is one of the Popperian conditions of scientific progress, not a distinctive feature of science. The unattainable universality of laws formulated in the humanities no longer strikes one as a very serious defect when one remembers that also in the natural sciences this demand cannot always be met. As far as falsification is concerned, if it is taken not as a strictly logical process (in which a general statement about a phenomenon that must not happen clashes with a single statement that reports its appearance, as in the well-known ‘black swan’ example of Popper), but as various procedures, in which general statements are confronted with empirical evidence, then one might argue that falsification may be adopted as a criterion of scientificity as well as an element of the critical method in the humanities.

According to Popper, the superior rule in science is that of rationality. This rule decides in which situation falsification has to be conducted by means of an experiment and in which it suffices to confront an interpretation with the text; when the research requires the precision of mathematical language and when the natural language is more adequate; when the hypotheses should aspire to the status of universal laws and when a statement informing us of a certain tendency may be satisfactory; in which cases we can make predictions and in which retrospective explanation of events is all that we can wish for. If this is so, then the humanities (on the conditions specified by Popper) may be considered a rightful science⁵⁶ and this conclusion, without exhausting the subject (a detailed construction of the Popperian model of the humanities is not the aim of the paper), ends the second part of the present considerations.

facts, which at the present moment we can fairly well describe and classify (remembering all the time that these facts are also of hypothetical nature), depends on which, among the more general hypotheses, we provisionally accept. Thus, also in the field of the humanities, our knowledge permanently increases, though simultaneously with its increase, our awareness of the limits of this knowledge grows also. An approach along these lines might well be adopted in the humanities.

⁵⁶ It does not seem reasonable to renounce the criterion of falsification. This would reduce the humanities to the philosophy of culture or art, where the value of its theories could only be measured with reference to the rule of logical coherence, the reasonability of accepted assumptions, effectiveness in solving problems, compatibility with scientific knowledge (but if there were no humanities, there would be no scientific knowledge of culture, so it is not clear that any such reference could actually be made). Additionally, it seems fairly obvious that the humanities have their empirical object (i.e. objects of world 3; cf. the passage titled *The Problem of the Irrefutability of Philosophical Theories*, [in:] K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, pp. 193–200).

3. Popper's cognitive theory of art — reconstruction

Naturally, the acceptance of the Popperian model of science by the humanities would not solve all their methodological problems. Lack of consensus concerning the very notion of art (fundamental for these disciplines) and the related notion of aesthetic value⁵⁷ seems to seriously hinder the progress of these disciplines which, like musicology, history of art, or literary studies, examine art. Only on the basis of a theory of art might it be feasible to specify the aim and range of analysis, the rules of interpretation and, possibly, the criteria of the evaluation of works of art. Popper, famous above all for his theory of science, also presented an outline of his theory of art,⁵⁸ which belongs to the cognitive tradition.⁵⁹ Popper's interest in art is actually the other reason (apart from the philosopher's uniform theory of science, which does not postulate a sharp division between the natural sciences and the humanities) why, considering a model of the humanities alternative to the currently fashionable poststructuralist model, it makes sense to take advantage of his ideas. Popper noted numerous similarities between science and art; the crucial significance of language in art; and the fact that world 3 (of which art is an element) helps explore, even more than that, co-creates world 2. The aim of the present section is to sketch the cognitive theory of art that can be reconstructed on the basis of Popper's works⁶⁰ and, subsequently, to offer a preliminary assessment of the possible consequences this theory might have for the methodology of a scholarly examination of art.

CRITIQUE OF THE EXPRESSIONIST AND COMMUNICATIVE INTERPRETATION OF ART

Popper rejects the expressionist theory of art on the grounds that all human life expresses one's personal experiences: "My main criticism of this theory is simple: *the expressionist theory of art is empty*. For everything a man or an animal can do is (among other things) an expression of an internal state, of emotions, and of a personality. [...] In other words it is not a characteristic of art".⁶¹ The expressionist theory of art is actually harmful: "Even today it is almost universally accepted that a work of art is the expression of the personality or of the emotions of the artist. Many composers and artists believe in this theory; and this belief has debased and almost destroyed art".⁶² Popper also rejects the theory that art is

⁵⁷ Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia sześciu pojęć* (Warszawa 2005), pp. 21, 62, 137, 179.

⁵⁸ Popper himself, as he reports in *Unended Quest*, was very much interested in music (he played the violin and the piano, tried his hand at composition, considered the career of a musician and for a year studied in the department of church music at the Vienna *Konservatorium*; K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest. An Intellectual Autobiography* (London 2002), pp. 56–59).

⁵⁹ Of course Popper's theory of art is not the only cognitive theory of art. A survey of such theories (from which, however, Popper's is missing) can be found in Borowiecka's work (E. Borowiecka, *Poznawcza wartość sztuki* (Lublin 1986), pp. 11–38).

⁶⁰ Popper made several comments on the subject of art, especially when discussing language, science, evolution and world 3; they do not, however, form a systematic discussion. The most extensive presentation of Popper's ideas on art may be found in K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...; Objective Knowledge...* (pp. 106–190, 289), *In Search of a Better World...* (pp. 7–29, 99–116, 223–232); *Unended Quest...* (pp. 65–82, 221–230).

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

⁶² K.R. Popper, *In Search of a Better World...*, p. 104.

about communication: communication is a function of all languages, the languages of animals included,⁶³ hence this theory also fails to capture the specific character of art.⁶⁴

ART AS LANGUAGE

The above critique becomes comprehensible, first of all, in the context of Popper's belief that art – not only literature, but also painting or music – is basically a language;⁶⁵ and, secondly, in the context of the theory of language that Popper took from Bühler and subsequently developed. Following this theory, language fulfils four basic functions: expressive, communicative, descriptive (informative) and argumentative (critical) – in this order. The natural language of man shares the former three functions with other languages (though languages of animals fulfil the descriptive function only in exceptional cases); the fourth – the argumentative function – is proper only to human language. The presence of any subsequent (higher) function in an utterance requires the presence of all the preceding (lower) functions. Popper speaks of expressive and communicative functions only when the message contains no information or, to be exact, no information other than that concerning the physiological state of the sender's organism.⁶⁶ Only the descriptive and argumentative functions make the transmission of information (either true or false) and its critical examination possible.⁶⁷ It is on the basis of these functions that man has developed the ability to lie, fantasize, tell tales and search for explanations. It is these functions that are crucial for the evolution of man.⁶⁸ That is why Popper criticizes expressive and communicative theories of language, which reduce language to expressive and communicative functions, thus ignoring what is most salient for man.

ART – DESCRIPTION OF REALITY

Popper's critique of the expressive and communicative theories of art should be

⁶³ K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest...*, p. 82. This justification is worth noting in so far as it testifies to Popper's assumption that art is a language.

⁶⁴ Popper also criticizes a slightly different version of the above theories according to which art conveys messages of which the artist need not be aware, whose source might be either divine or unconscious (K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, p. 32).

⁶⁵ Popper believes that language plays an essential role in art as well as in science, including mathematics (*ibidem*, pp. 37–38).

⁶⁶ An example of a pure expressive function supplied by Popper is that of a yawn in solitude. The same yawn in the company of other people, where it may evoke some response, is a combination of expressive and communicative functions.

⁶⁷ Every use of either the descriptive or argumentative function involves the use of expressive and communicative ones.

⁶⁸ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 79–92. The breakthrough, according to Popper, happens when language in its descriptive function is employed with the purpose of lying (this is the word Popper uses, but the phrase “creating fiction” might perhaps be more adequate): “But then came the point when language could be used for lies, for ‘storytelling’”. This seems to me the decisive step, the step that made language truly descriptive and truly human. It led, I suggest, to storytelling of an explanatory kind, to myth making; to the critical scrutiny of reports and descriptions, and thus to science; to imaginative fiction and, I suggest, to art — to storytelling in the form of pictures” (K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest...*, p. 221; slightly doubtful is the position Popper attributes, in the process described above, to lying because narrative need not imply fiction, let alone lies).

understood by analogy. Popper does not question the fact that art expresses and communicates some information about the artist's state.⁶⁹ However, he protests against reducing art to either expression or communication, defending its much more important ability to describe reality⁷⁰. Recognizing the descriptive function of art, Popper refuses to ascribe the argumentative function to art; it seems that in his opinion there is no place within art for a critical discussion of the artistic description (representation) of reality. Even though language, in his opinion, fulfils in addition to the descriptive function also the argumentative one, and it would be reasonable to expect that art, being language (for this is how Popper understands art), will also perform this function, Popper attributes it to science, not art. This decision seems mistaken. The novel in particular goes beyond the stage of description when it subjects various representations of the world to critical evaluation, for example by contrasting them with each other (as demonstrated by Bakhtin's theory of polyphony in the novel) or by introducing critical reflection into the text (most fully in the genre of the novel of ideas).

CRITICISM IN SCIENCE AND ART – COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Even though it is, above all, science (not art) that is concerned with cognition, according to Popper, art and science have much in common anyway (or so one may argue, generalizing what Popper says about poetry, music and natural science): they derive from myth, their original purpose was to help man explain the world and understand oneself,⁷¹ they demand imagination, intuition, a sense of form and an element of criticism. It is especially this element of criticism that interests Popper. In art this is aesthetic criticism, which concerns aesthetic values, focuses on form and takes place within the creative act itself (it is the artist's creative self-criticism), whereas in science this is rational criticism, which concerns cognitive value, focuses on truth and comes both from the author and other researchers⁷². What distinguishes science is precisely that – truth-oriented critical rationalism⁷³.

Thus we have here both comparison — art and science share their origins, the initial cognitive task, creative and critical elements, and contrast — only in science is truth the regulative idea, in art these are form-related aesthetic values;

⁶⁹ "But this is merely a psychological aspect of the matter, and for this very reason of minor importance. The important thing is the work of art" (K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest...*, p. 67).

⁷⁰ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 93–94. We can speak here of communicating cognitive content, beginning with the most basic ideas (e.g. other people exist, they feel the need to share their experience of life, which in some respects may resemble ours) and then moving on to more refined ones (e.g. the thought from *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* that consciousness might be a burden that impoverishes human ability to be heroic and victorious in one's struggle with the challenges of life).

⁷¹ "They [poetry, music and science] stem from the attempt to understand our origin and our fate, and the origin and the fate of the world" (K.R. Popper, *In Search of a Better World...*, p. 227).

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 225–232.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, pp. 53–54. Cf. "What is the characteristic difference between a scientific theory and a work of fiction? It is not, I hold, that the theory is possibly true while the descriptions in the story are not true, although truth and falsity have something to do with it. The difference is, I suggest, that the theory and the story are embedded in different critical traditions" (K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 289).

further, in science, criticism takes the form of public discussion, whereas in art it is present first of all in the creative act.⁷⁴ Oddly enough, Popper does not seem to attach much importance to the phenomenon of art criticism or the interaction between the artist and the art recipient(s), though in the context of Popperian appreciation of criticism, it would seem reasonable to treat a work of art together with its critical reception (as well as the responses of other artists embodied in their works) as a whole. On this account, a work of art, i.e. a hypothesis concerning an aspect of the world, is but a part of the process of problem solving⁷⁵ and finds its completion in the critical debate. In this way one could account for the universal phenomenon of art criticism (criticism which has adopted an almost institutional form, cf. the critical programmes on TV or the radio, critical reviews in the press, artistic competitions and festivals). It seems that the function of such criticism does not consist merely in examining art (this is the task of the humanities),⁷⁶ or its popularisation, but in entering in a dialogical relation with artists and providing them with feedback information, which may be useful in their further artistic activity.

Defining in greater detail the criteria of evaluation employed in literary criticism, Popper limits them to aesthetic value, leaving the assessment of the value of the work in terms of truth or problem-solving capacity (the validity of problems, exhaustive presentation, etc.) to non-literary criticism: "In literary criticism the term [criticism] is extended so that you may accept that a story is false⁷⁷ and then criticize its literary merits. In non-literary criticism, there are other important points besides the truth of a story to be evaluated – such as its relevance or its completeness. These two points presuppose that the story is told in order to solve some *problem*".⁷⁸ This division of criticism into literary and non-literary, in my opinion, wrongly limits the scope of the former: if describing the world is the primary task of art, then it seems incomprehensible why art should be evaluated as art with the exclusion of its cognitive value.

ART AS CREATIVITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

The element of criticism inherent in a creative act is of fundamental importance.

⁷⁴ Another difference between science and art, for Popper, concerns progress. Convinced of progress in science, he questions its presence in art, tentatively allowing, however, for some progressive changes in technology or formulation of problems due to the artist's acquaintance with the accomplishment of his/her predecessors (*Unended Quest...*, pp. 75–80).

⁷⁵ More on the subject of this dimension of art (i.e. art as solving problems) in the forthcoming paragraphs.

⁷⁶ It is important to distinguish art criticism, reviewing contemporary cultural events for the public and possibly in the first place the artists, describing often in highly subjective terms the experience of a given artwork, from scholarly examination of art, though to the terminology – here Zgorzelski pointed out that it may be misleading (*Against Methodological...*, p. 231).

⁷⁷ Also here Popper does not seem to distinguish between fiction and falsehood.

⁷⁸ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 91 (emphasis in the original). In the discussion which took place after the lecture and whose transcription can be found in the book, Popper introduces a distinction between two kinds of truth: in science, truth consists in correspondence to the facts, in art truth is "good lying – undetectable lying" (*ibidem*, p. 96). This slightly shocking definition of truth in art, however, is most probably a side-effect of Popper's identification of fiction with falsehood.

Art may be interpreted as solving problems in the process of interaction (feedback) between the artist's mind and the work of art⁷⁹. The work which comes into being as a result of mutual influence of world 2 and world 3 transcends the initial project, image or idea with which the artist has begun his/her work.

The influence is reciprocal. World 3 (above all language, but also art) has helped man develop the full consciousness of self,⁸⁰ giving him/her a chance to view themselves from the outside. People have gained insight, as well as a chance to create themselves. World 2 (the world of psychic experience) however, is not entirely autonomous with reference to World 3 (the world produced by the human mind); although world 2 shapes this world (world 3), it is also itself subject to its influence,⁸¹ not necessarily in the way intended by man or with man's full awareness of the fact.⁸²

This ability to create world 3 and (based on the feedback mechanism) of oneself seems to be constitutive of man's freedom and responsibility.⁸³ Popper strongly emphasizes the importance of the self-transcendence of which man is capable, thanks to world 3: "The incredible thing about life, evolution, and mental growth is just this method of give and take, this interaction between our actions and their results, by which we constantly transcend ourselves, our talents, and our gifts. This self-transcendence is the most striking and important fact of all life and all evolution, and especially of human evolution".⁸⁴

In a broader evolutionary perspective, this means that it is a function of the mind to produce objects of world 3 (language and works of art included) and interact with them.⁸⁵ Products of the mind (such as the English language or *Hamlet*), similarly to dams built by beavers, are "exosomatic tools"⁸⁶ helpful in solving problems, some of which (not necessarily all of which) might be directly related to the struggle for survival.⁸⁷ Problem solving is, for Popper, the essence of life.⁸⁸ However, one should bear in mind that the solution of one problem as a rule gives rise to another problem, and this also applies to world 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 20–22, 30–32. In *Unended Quest...* Popper gives some examples of problems that a composer may face (pp. 74–75).

⁸⁰ The beginnings of personality, according to Popper, may be observed already among higher animals (*Unended Quest...*, pp. 222–225).

⁸¹ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 114–115.

⁸² Although created by man, world 3 exceeds his/her intentions (for example, by creating a system of numbers, involuntarily man has led to the rise of prime numbers; *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 24–32, *Objective Knowledge...*, pp. 115–119).

⁸³ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, pp. 140–142.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 140–141. "If I am right in my conjecture that we grow, and become ourselves, only in interaction with world 3, then the fact that we can all contribute to this world, if only a little, can give comfort to everyone;" (*Unended Quest...*, pp. 229–230). Elsewhere Popper explains that the influence of world 3 on even the most creative people by far exceeds the contribution they might make to world 3 (*Objective Knowledge...*, p. 147).

⁸⁵ K.R. Popper, *Unended Quest...*, p. 221, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ K.R. Popper, *Knowledge and the Body-Mind Problem...*, p. 34.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 55–63.

⁸⁸ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 148. Cf. "The tentative solutions which animals and plants incorporate into their anatomy and their behaviour are biological analogues of theories; and vice versa: theories correspond (as do many exosomatic products such as honeycombs, and especially exosomatic tools, such as spiders' webs) to endosomatic organs and their ways of functioning", (*Objective Knowledge...*, p. 145).

Summing up, art, which in some fundamental sense is a language, fulfils for Popper, apart from expressive and communicative functions, a most important cognitive function – even though he limits art to descriptions of the world (to the exclusion of their critical examination) and reduces art criticism to aesthetic evaluation. Describing the world, explaining it through story-telling, examining oneself (one's internal subjective world) by means of art as if one were an object that exists externally and objectively – this is how art can serve cognitive purposes. Further, art gives man a chance to create him/herself as well as the surrounding world, i.e. it acts as an important factor in emergent evolution.

ART – COGNITION OF WORLD 2

Although Popper does not formulate this thought explicitly, it seems that his theory might be reasonably extended by the hypothesis that the proper object of artistic cognition is the inner world (world 2), which evades other cognitive efforts: “Why, we could ask, are we at all successful in speaking about reality? Is it not true that reality must have a definite structure in order that we can speak about it? Could we not conceive of a reality which would be like a thick fog – and nothing else, no solids, no movement? Or perhaps like a fog with certain changes in it – rather indefinite changes of light, for example? Of course, by my very attempt to describe this world I have shown that it *can* be described in our language, but this is not to say that *any* such world could be so described. [...] In fact I believe that we are all most intimately acquainted with a world that cannot be properly described by our language which has developed mainly as an instrument for describing and dealing with our physical environment – more precisely, with physical bodies of medium size in moderately slow motion. The indescribable world I have in mind is, of course, the world I have ‘in my mind’ – the world which most psychologists (except the behaviourists) attempt to describe, somewhat unsuccessfully, with the help of what is nothing but a host of metaphors taken from the language of physics, of biology, and of social life”.⁸⁹

Art, seemingly useless, is perhaps concerned with the cognition (with the help of language as in the novel or without it as in a piano concert)⁹⁰ of world 2.⁹¹ This interpretation of art as exploring human consciousness would justify the critics' inclination to approach art in psychological terms, for it would be impossible not to mention world 2 when discussing art on the assumption that art explores world 2. At the same time, the excessive one-sidedness of their approach, as argued by Popper, might be erroneous: art must not be reduced in its function to expressing world 2 – exploration involving much more than mere expression.

If art is non-scientific cognition, then it is not limited by the formal rules of science (such as the rules of logic, critical discussion or simple language); everything

⁸⁹ K.R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations...*, p. 213.

⁹⁰ The distinction is not valid if language is understood more broadly, not merely as a natural language. Popper, finding language in art and mathematics, seems to opt for such broad interpretation where language is taken as an open system of signs.

⁹¹ The thought that works of art serve as tools that help man explore his/her inner world, I owe to my father. It fits very well in Popper's view of art, though, as far as I know, Popper does not formulate it explicitly.

- the mode of fiction, fantastic transformation of reality, any artistic material – is permissible as long as
 - striving after truth remains the primary objective; otherwise we cannot reasonably speak of cognition (this condition seems the most important),
 - the postulate of aesthetic value⁹² (related to the fact that art explores by means of form) is respected (cognition by means of form is the distinctive feature of artistic cognition),
 - the postulate of originality is also respected (any human activity is characterized by this quality of uniqueness/unrepeatability, but in art this is reinforced by the rule forbidding passive imitation; in fact the postulate of cognitive value excludes imitation anyway).⁹³

One could add that, just as in science, there is both proper research and popularisation of the results obtained in the process of scientific investigations – so in art one could differentiate between the exploration of one's inner world and publication of the discoveries (where the latter might be the prerogative of didactic art).

4. The methodology of art studies in the context of Popper's theory of art

Accepting the view that art, like science, examines reality – inner reality (world 2, like psychology, one of the social sciences) to be precise, not external reality (world 1, like natural science, or world 3, like the humanities) – would not fail to affect the concept of the humanities, especially art studies, which under such circumstances would become a science whose proper object is non-scientific (i.e. artistic) cognition. In other words, the relation between art and the humanities would look as follows: among various objects of world 3 there are some which serve to explore (in a non-scientific mode) and transform world 2, and this is art; among various objects of world 3 there are also some which serve to examine (in a scientific mode) objects of world 3, art included, and these are the humanities.

⁹² Even if priority is given to the cognitive value of art, there is no way one can escape the notion of aesthetic value with all its indefiniteness. It seems that Popper might favour the concept of aesthetic value defined in terms of formal perfection rather than beauty (in his *In Search of a Better World...* Popper mentions beauty as one of various formal categories that aesthetic criticism should take into account, pp. 226–227. Developing Popper's thought, one might construct the concept of aesthetic value as formal perfection taken not in itself, but with reference to the message conveyed by a given work of art.

⁹³ Such cognitive theory of art seems to miss the element of uselessness, which for a long time has been perceived as an essential element of artistic creations. According to such a traditional approach, man, like other species, struggles to survive – most of his/her life activities are subordinate to this very task. What is unnecessary or redundant in terms of the evolutionary economy – heroic exploits or works of art – calls for admiration. What we appreciate in art is its autonomy: that it seems devoid of any purpose beyond itself, that it exists only for its own sake, thus ignoring the biological rules that govern all animate nature, conveying a (possibly illusionary) sense of freedom. Uselessness has thus been related to transcendence. Cognitive theory of art denies this element of uselessness, explaining that art is useful as it fulfils an important cognitive function. Indeed, Popper perceived the element of transcendence elsewhere: in the mutual influence of worlds 2 and 3 and the theoretically limitless progress that might be its result (cf. *Objective Knowledge...*, pp. 146–150).

Popper is cautious when formulating his ideas about the scholarly examination of works of art. He suggests that understanding an artwork might be similar to understanding a scientific theory: the main point is to identify the problem that a work of art or a theory is trying to solve and to identify the background of the problem.⁹⁴ “It may be interesting and fruitful to investigate how far we can apply situational analysis (the idea of problem solving) to art, music, and poetry, and whether it can help our understanding in these fields. That it can help in some cases I do not doubt. Beethoven’s notebooks for the last movement of the Ninth Symphony show that the introduction to this movement tells the story of his attempts to solve a problem – the problem of breaking into words. To see this helps our understanding of the music and the musician. Whether this understanding helps our enjoyment of the music is a different question”.⁹⁵

The possible implications of the Popperian view of art for the study of art are worth considering in greater detail. Firstly, when analysing art it seems a mistake to underestimate its cognitive value. The cognitive results might be either “objective”, i.e. they might constitute a shared accomplishment of a given culture (attempts to render in literature the unconscious, prior to the publication of Freud’s works might be a case in point) or, more often, “subjective”, i.e. belonging to individual experience, hence more difficult to capture (for example, when a reader of *Waterland* by Graham Swift realizes how important narratives are in human existence).⁹⁶

Secondly, in addition to the assessment of the cognitive value of art, it would be reasonable to examine the impact of art on world 2: the psychic life of artists in the first place and also of the recipients of art, given that by creating art (possibly also by responding to art) man also indirectly creates him/herself.

Both these criteria of assessment seem even better justified in the case of literature and other kinds of art which employ language (in the narrow meaning of the word, i.e. natural language) as their artistic medium, language itself being a product of the human mind and one that, according to Popper, has contributed to the greatest degree to the development of human personality. The two higher functions of language – descriptive and argumentative – are present in literature (to some extent also in other kinds of art). This is an additional incentive to examine literature not only in terms of its form (the proper execution of the principles of composition), but also in terms of its representation of reality (the adequacy of the representation of the real world by means of the fictional one, or the soundness of the critique of various representations of reality offered in a given work of literature) and, finally, in terms of its creative potential (i.e. ability to transform the human mind).

⁹⁴ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, pp. 179–180.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 182–183.

⁹⁶ The task of assessing the cognitive value of art is fraught with difficulties, as both the acts of the creation and the reception of art are basically individual (not collective) acts, which take place in world 2 (the world of subjective experience). Their effects – works of art or critical opinions about art expressed in public – however, belong to world 3, i.e. to the objective reality. It seems that with reference to these it should be possible to formulate hypotheses concerning the cognition or insight gained by means of a given artwork.

Thirdly, considering the importance of criticism in culture, it would seem reasonable to combine the examination of works of art with the examination of their critical reception, as well as the response that a given work of art has inspired in other works.

One can immediately see two basic problems facing art studies conceived along the lines sketched above. One problem relates to the difficulty of translating into logical and rational discourse, cognitive content whose proper object is often irrational⁹⁷ and non-verbal (human psychic experience) and expressed in art *via* form as well as the world presented as a model of reality (in the case of representational art) and language (in the case of verbal art). Apparently there is no one simple way to accomplish this, but it might be worth pointing out that the situation of the natural sciences is not so very different: a frog too, for example, is neither verbal nor fully rational. The other problem, mentioned above, is the lack of clear criteria of aesthetic quality. The assessment of artistic form might perhaps be related to this form's participation in the cognitive endeavour of art. A description and analysis of the form of an artwork should then be complemented by an interpretation of its meaning (i.e. the form's contribution to the meaning of the work) and an assessment of the total cognitive result.

The necessary rules of interpretation and evaluation for art studies might be worked out with reference to the cognitive aim of art (i.e. the identification of the artistic problem and critical assessment of its solution) as well as the method of broadly understood falsification (i.e. falsification conducted not by means of experiment but formal analysis – if art explores by means of form – examining in the course of critical discussion the coherence, comprehensiveness and rationality of humanistic argumentation).

Among the tasks of art studies conceived from the above model, one might enumerate recording cognitive results achieved by means of art, examining how art (single works of art, or certain artistic traditions, the Victorian novel, for example) achieves its cognitive objective, and how it fulfils the postulate of aesthetic value (this task would involve analyzing the relationship between form and cognitive content); assessing the impact of art on man, discussing the history (evolution) of art.

Conclusion

In light of the above considerations, it seems that Popper's theory of science may be applied to the field of the humanities and it may provide the criteria demarcating the limits beyond which the humanities lose the status of science; it may also serve as the methodological basis for these disciplines.

The cognitive value of the humanities consists in this approach in their striving after truth about culture (their object), by continuously replacing hypotheses which less successfully correspond with the facts, with those which correspond to

⁹⁷ This need not necessarily imply that cognition by means of art is irrational. Art, along this approach, explores partly irrational aspects of reality (human psychic experience), but the irrationality of its object need not affect art (in the way that the alleged irrationality of art need not result in the irrationality of the humanities).

the facts more successfully; by putting forward tentative solutions and eliminating in the process of critical discussion, any errors they might contain. The criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability: to be falsifiable a theory must say something about reality. Given that their theories meet this criterion, the humanities may count as science. This, indeed, seems to be the case, i.e. the criterion of falsifiability may be applied, though depending on the specific discipline and the object of research, one may need to be satisfied with either lesser or much lesser precision in comparison with natural science (linguistics or archaeology belong to the former group of disciplines, whereas literary studies, especially when they are concerned with interpretation of works of art, are an extreme case of the latter group).

It is true that each person's encounter with art is individual and unique. The same is also true about a person's encounter with all reality. Common sense, however, discourages one from adopting the position of radical scepticism. At the bottom of almost any action lies the assumption that reality is objective in its existence and basic properties. There is no need to make an exception for works of art. Regardless of who reads (and when they read) *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, the novel's mode of narration will oscillate between the objective report of an external narrator and the subjective account of the first-person collective protagonist; likewise Hamlet will keep asking the same question, "To be, or not to be?" A real, empirical object of world 3 is in each case the point of reference.

The scientific approach to reality is not the only possible approach, but regarding the search for the truth about the world (world 1 in any case), it remains unrivalled. Theologians attempt to subject the supernatural world to scientific reflection; if so, there seems to be no reason why the world of culture should be excluded from the domain of scientific examination.

If the humanities may be treated as empirical science and structured along the model of science put forward by Popper (in spite of all the difficulties involved in falsification, formulation of predictions and universal laws), then it might be worth considering whether this approach might provide the humanities with an efficient method of defence against irrationality: ideological dogmatism on the one hand, and relativism (which in its poststructuralist variant is likewise dogmatic), on the other. This indeed seems to be the case. The Popperian rejection of dogmatism questions the scientific status of such approaches as feminism, post-colonialism, psychoanalysis or deconstruction. These remain important traditions within culture but cannot compete with scholarly analyses or interpretations. The status which the "dogmatic" approaches enjoy is that of pre-scientific social, political, philosophical or psychological theories (*nota bene* the word pre-scientific should not be taken here as pejorative). Absence of the basic scientific aim – cognition of truth – and lack of respect for the rules of logic, empirical data and the ideal of clear language, disqualify in turn all deconstructionist discourse as non-scientific.

To differentiate between feminism, psychoanalysis or deconstruction and the "true" science, one need not necessarily refer to Popper. It suffices to retrieve the model of science that was *de facto* taken for granted in European (and American) culture until the mid-twentieth century. It is only then that the postulates of sci-

ence free of ideology and directed at truth were seriously questioned. Nonetheless, Popper's theory helps thoroughly justify the decision to revert to the past ideals.

In the dispute with post-structuralism Popper's theory does not offer a simple solution. Poststructuralists reject science as a perilous game, a form of (intellectual) dominance and repression, which reduces and simplifies reality, claiming to be objective and true. This claim, they argue, is groundless, as any narration or discourse about science is not ideology-free. Poststructuralists therefore choose irrationality, freedom from the dominance of reason, methodology and logic. Their attitude is dictated by the belief that there are no facts, no truth, no objectivity; that it is important to deconstruct the illusion that they exist. The choice of rationality cannot be proved – it is a choice Popper admitted – an act of faith. But the decision, according to Popper, is neither wrong nor irrational, pragmatically speaking: “a *pragmatic belief in the results of science* is not irrational, because there is nothing more ‘rational’ than the method of critical discussion, which is the method of science. And although it would be irrational to accept any of its results as certain, there is nothing ‘better’ when it comes to practical action: there is no alternative method which might be said to be more rational”.⁹⁸ Summing up, one could say that there is no ultimate justification for rationality: the choice of rationality is an act of faith; but the rationality of this act of faith may well be justified: there is no competitive, more rational choice, the scientific method, albeit unjustifiable, bringing truly impressive results.

The other issue discussed in this paper is the possible use of Popper's theory of art to define the essence and methodology of sciences concerned with art. It has been argued that the cognitive theory of art might help define with relatively high precision the proper aspect of art for the humanities to examine. If the role of art is, firstly, to examine and, secondly, to transform the human mind (and only subsequently to inspire various kinds of experience, such as delight, amusement or *catharsis*), then this (exploration/transformation of the mind) should be in the centre of scholarly interest. Aesthetic categories as such are less important, the major significance being their contribution to the cognitive function of art.

On the basis of the above considerations, it seems possible to make a tentative list of rules regulating research on art, such as the principle of the competition of hypothetical, falsifiable interpretations, the principle of examination of an artefact with reference to the problem facing the artist, in the context of other objects of world 3, and together with the history of the work's critical reception (but without paying too much attention to the subjective, creative experience of the artist); the principle that gives priority to the assessment of the cognitive value of an artwork. The above rules are enumerated here merely as examples to show that Popper's

⁹⁸ K.R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge...*, p. 27. Bryan Magee, a disciple of Popper, interprets the choice of rationality in a slightly different way when he argues that Popper “[...] not just admits but argues at some length that in the last resort it is impossible to put rationality itself on rational foundations. When all analysis has come to an end, our belief in rationality is an act of faith, and an act of faith that can be justified, if at all, only by our success in meeting criticisms and surviving tests. He does not believe in ultimate foundations, neither for morality, nor for rationality, nor for knowledge, and his philosophy asserts that they do not need to be postulated in any of these fields”, (B. Magee, *Confessions of a Philosopher* (London 1998), p. 249).

theory may not only serve to build a highly abstract model of the humanities, but it can also help work out their methodology.

This presentation of the way in which Popper's theory of science and art (modified where advisable or necessary) might be applied in the humanities is obviously merely a sketch of a project, but one that might deserve more interest in the future in the face of, on one hand, the challenges facing the humanities and, on the other, the richness of Popper's thought which has not yet been properly exploited.